

216 026

MESSAGE AND MINISTRATIONS

R. VENKATA RATNAM

VOL. V.

UNIVERSAL
LIBRARY

OU_216026

UNIVERSAL
LIBRARY

SEPTUAGENARY COMMEMORATION VOLUME.

**THE
MESSAGE AND MINISTRATIONS**

OF

DEWAN BAHADUR

DR. SIR R. VENKATA RATNAM, KT.,

M.A., LT., D. LITT., LL. D.,

*Principal Emeritus, Pittapur Rajah's College, Cocanada ;
Life-Member of the Senate and sometime Vice-Chancellor,
University of Madras.*

EDITED,

With Introduction,

BY

RAO SAHIB

DR. V. RAMAKRISHNA RAO, M.A., L.T., PH. D.,

*Principal, Pittapur Rajah's College, Cocanada ;
Member of the Senate, Academic Council and Syndicate
and President of the Faculty of Arts,
Andhra University.*

Vol. V

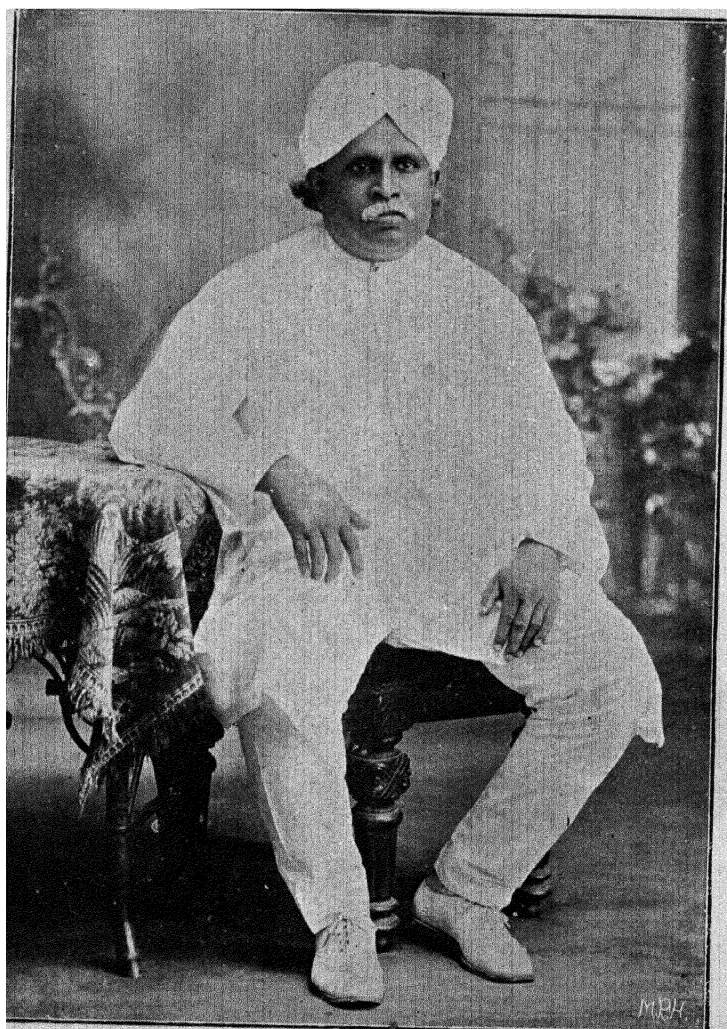
MADRAS.

Printed at Ananda Press.

1932.

Re. 1 or S. 1/6]

. [Postage Extra.



W. K. R. R.
W. K. R. R.

OM!

UNTO

HONOURED 'GURUTHULYA',

PANDIT SITANATH TATTWABHUSHAN,

with

Warm Sentiments of Profound Gratitude

for

Priceless Spiritual Benefits Received.



CONTENTS.

Photogravure Portrait	Frontispiece.
			PAGE.
Introductory Note	i

ADDRESSES AND ARTICLES.

	I	Some Implications of Love	... (1930) ...	1
	II	Pre-Vacation Advice to Youthful		
		Worshippers	... (1907) ...	17
	III	The Child-Widow	... (1931) ...	22
Class-room Talks.	IV	The Approach to Shakespeare	... (1913) ...	30
	V	Love	... (1914) ...	36
	VI	Beware of Vulgar Taste	... (1916) ...	39
	VII	The New Testament of Sacrifice	(1915) ...	48
	VIII	A Decade at the College	... („) ...	54
	IX	Woman in the Brahma Samaj	... (1930) ..	61
	X	Birth-day Acknowledgments	... (1925) ...	66
	XI	A Charge to Outgoing Students	... (1915) ...	74
	XII	My Debt to the Brahma Samaj		
		and its Condition in Andhra	... (1926) ...	88
	XIII	Anti-Untouchability	... (1925) ...	104
	XIV	Higher Morality and Deeper		
		Spirituality	... (1931) ...	109

SERVICES AND SERMONS.

I	Karuna and <i>Santhi</i>	... (1931) ...	129
II	Religion and Life	... (1928) ...	142
III	Birth-day Family Service	... (1926) ...	156
IV	Marriage Service	... (1929) ...	172

	PAGE.
V Birth-day Family Service ... (1929) ...	189
VI 'The Two Hermits' or Trust Him for All ... (1927) ...	202
VII Birth-day Family Service ... (1928) ...	232
VIII Darkness the Shadow of Provi- dence ... (1929) ...	244
IX <i>Grihadevatha</i> ... (1925) ...	263

PRAYERS AND MEDITATIONS.

I 'Bhai, Allah Hai' ... (1931) ...	279
II <i>Pithanosi Pithano Bodhi</i> ... (1929) ...	288
III Inter-Religious Conference Benediction ... (1930) ...	292
IV Birth-day Family Thanksgiving. (1924) ...	295
V The Regenerating God ... (1930) ...	302
VI Birth-day Thanksgiving ... (1924) ...	305
VII Brahmic Unity ... (1928) ...	312
VIII A Birth-day Supplication ... (1931) ...	314
IX In the Household of Faith ... (1926) ...	317
X Not Loss but Gain ... (1931) ...	320
XI 'Lead, kindly Light, lead' ... (1930) ...	326
XII Motherhood and Immortality ... (1932) ...	330

APPRECIATIONS AND REMINISCENCES.

I Rajah Ram Mohan Roy ... (1925) ...	339
II Rajah Ram Mohan Roy ... (1908) ...	346



CORRECTIONS.

Page	Line	<i>For</i>	<i>Read</i>
ix	7	Saadis	Saadi's
xiii	30	prospects	prospect
147	15	funeral	funereal
183	17	He, may	He may,
273	7	high	higher
292	19	Goutamn	Goutama
295	3	salutions	salutations
302	8	doest	dost
317	7	apprach	approach

OM !
INTRODUCTORY NOTE.

One more instalment of a thrice-sacred task it is given to us piously to undertake and, however imperfectly, to execute through the abounding grace of the Lord of all abiding relations. The feeling heart overfills with the joy of gratitude; and the faithful hand turns to weave its votive wreath of fresh collects so like yet unlike their predecessors. Around the present volume gather the sweetest of associations as a commemorative token of the Seventieth, even as the opening volume carried with it its own unique interest in connection with the Sixtieth Birthday-offering. Thus far, in five dear volumes comes to be garnered the priceless harvest that began to be reaped a decade back at the Diamond Jubilee of 1922. Blessed be the name of Him whose 'message' they proclaim and whose 'ministrations' they purvey through a chosen voice and a consecrated heart!

In its day and within the limited range of circulation then possible, the volume prior to this, of course, met with as lively appreciation from the reading public as engrossing pre-occupation with momentous national issues could spare for the apparently restricted concerns of inner, spiritual life. But, in truth, as recognised by the reviewers, the interior of the individual by no means exclusively occupied the entire ground. The *Hindu* of

Madras appraised the Fourth Volume as "full of devotional feeling" and, at the same time, as revealing "the attitude of reform and reconstruction for which the Brahma Samaj stands." The "United India and Indian States" of Delhi commended its especial value as "devoted to the varied, vital relations between religion and the interests and incidents of life—individual and communal, national and international." Again, referring to the whole series and "the unstinted admiration that they fully deserve from all quarters, Indian and foreign," the reviewer for the "Modern Review," Prof. Dhiren-dranath Vedantavagish, M.A., laid particular stress upon the evidence afforded of "how necessarily but unostentatiously must in a true devout life mysticism grow without inducing quietism or anti-socialism, on the one hand, and anti-scientific tendencies, on the other." "Sir Venkata Ratnam," he proceeded to add, "is, in all senses of the term, a modern man; but in him is found the best type of piety for which we wistfully look to the past but in vain. This has been generated in him by modern influences in modern surroundings. And for it he holds Ram Mohan, the pioneer of New India, responsible."

Now, alike in matter and in manner, the latest-plucked fruits, no less than the earlier ones, from the garden of graces will be found at once to offer

"A perpetual feast of nectar'd sweets
Where no crude surfeit reigns."

The power and the spell have already approved themselves to such advantage that the new wine needs

no editor's or reviewer's bush. The secret of this marked excellence is primarily traceable to the life behind the utterance — a life altogether radiant with the loveliness of love, the beauty of benignity and the halo of holiness. The life, as ever, is the light of men : and ' personality ' has rightly been declared the greatest force that has emerged in the world. A lute of many strings, the life dear beyond words to a vast, wide circle of admiring friends, pupils and disciples has struck its varied notes now for full three score years and ten. And for all this, they are inestimably the richer even with the wealth of the very substance of that life. ' He who unites word to word gives away a drop from the blood of his heart '. So sang one of the Persian poets. The appraisement stands as true of the preacher and teacher as of the poet : for, do they not all empty themselves literally for others' sake ? Thus, once more, in the spoken expression of something seen, felt and lived through, we have pre-eminently the going out of something gleaned through years of diligent study and devout meditation and the practical realisations of the spirit. The key-note, here as elsewhere ; lies in the delicately sensitive, strangely comprehensive mind habitually attuned and attempered to the deeper things of the soul. The originality, virility and clarity of the thought being remarkably in proportion to the capacity for absorption, the synthetic genius — synthetic because sympathetic — makes the whole inner life a constant vigil and a strenuous aspiration towards the Highest. Hence the fusion, in a striking degree, of the subjectivity of inspiration with the

objectivity of expression, what is cognised individually being conveyed so universally. If, according to the late Poet Laureate of England, 'a poem is the intimate echo of the poet's life', not less easily must the passionate, personal experience of the preacher and teacher account for all his interpretative analysis of eternal values in an illuminating form. The magic melodies caught up in the succeeding pages are of the orphic song rising to that mood of mystic rapture which great art induces in those who are worthy to receive it. As you witness, at every turn, a concentrated depth of understanding - the insight of the heart far removed from the sight of the eye or the sophism of the mind, you are led spontaneously to exclaim,

" God's aglow to the loving heart
In what was mere earth before !"

In brief, the message and the ministrations are those superbly wrought out of the living experience of the Living God. Correlate the dictum of the modern poet, 'God has a few of us whom he whispers in the ear,' to the duty of the ancient prophet, 'The Lord hath given me the tongue of the instructed, that I may know how to assist the weary with my words'; and you grasp the pregnant force, herein amply illustrated, of Ruskin's remark, "The more I think of it, the more I find the conclusion impressed upon me that the greatest thing a human soul ever does in this world is to see something and tell what it saw in a plain way".

'The vision and the faculty divine'—how, then, in their main features and their essential purport, do they

impress themselves upon the serious-minded reader, so far as this volume is concerned? Within the compass of the four old sections, the pieces comprised in each maintain a peculiarly uniform level of idealistic as also of artistic merit, inviting comparison with the best of the productions hitherto before us. This renders difficult any attempt at singling out some, at least, among them for particular notice. Though independent items relating to a variety of topics, spiritual, moral, social and literary, they yet, by their sequence, constitute a complementary series with one cumulative impression as to the central point of view.

In the opening section of 'Addresses and Articles', the place of honour is properly assigned to 'The greatest thing in the world'. Of this regnant principle of Love, the far-reaching implications are thus summed up: "The edifice of the entire universe is constructed with the substance of Love, not of Wisdom or of Power. Therefore, the particular characteristic of God which shall be our supreme thought and sure knowledge of God is that He is the God of Love. And the only way to the realisation of God is through the avenue of Love. If, then, our approach to God be possible and free only through the avenue of Love, it must be a love that gives all and demands nought. Such love leads to divine poverty - lacking nothing, for it would save nothing for the self. Love is the divining-rod of the soul to discover the secret springs of heavenly grace and the hidden treasure of human worth". Again, one of the little, luminous group of Class-room Talks—that on 'the Star of Love

all stars above'—presents a direct glorification of 'the food of the immortals' in its triple form as the self-denying love of the mother, the self-surrendering love of the wife and the self-dedicating love of the devotee. Next, for an exquisite picture of the vital relation, aye, the essential identity, of Love and Sacrifice through Service—a constantly recurring theme throughout, we turn with immense refreshment to another of those Talks, entitled 'The New Testament of Sacrifice', which, in choice cadences, expounds and exemplifies "the basic principle of our life, even that of life made perfect in sacrifice". The two other specimens of this new feature of the volume are 'The Approach to Shakespeare' and 'Beware of Vulgar Taste'. The former, to apply to it its own words, conveys "a hospitable invitation to a most substantial intellectual and spiritual feast," and shows how, as with the Master himself, "the gift of insight into Shakespeare's spirit is, not a stale or venal market commodity, but a deep mine of culture and a perennial fountain of humanity." The latter, casually suggested by occasional low-toned conversations in Shakespeare—"the 'Lay-Bible' of the English-speaking people", embodies an ennobling descant upon the more positive, practical, refined issues behind the favourite old problem of Purity and Anti-Nauch. Altogether, these so-called side-talks in the course of secular instructional work will help to explain and illustrate a phenomenon by which, at every step, the Class-room was hallowed into a very Shrine and Literature itself hailed as a true echo of Hosannas from the Holy of Holies. Likewise, what 'work of noble

note' in the inculcation of lofty principles of conduct and character went to enrich every opportunity even outside the Class-room and the Class-hour, might fairly be gauged from such discourses as the 'Pre-Vacation Advice to Youthful Worshippers' and the Valedictory 'Charge to Outgoing Students'. 'A Decade at the College', 'Birth-day Acknowledgments' and 'My Debt to the Brahma Samaj'—these, with their insight and outlook, their softness of tone and tenderness of touch, which is all their own; these must prove of more than autobiographical interest, reaching out as they do to wider horizons as to the amenities of the profession, the responsibilities of life and the claims of Spiritual Theism. The pronouncements on 'The Child-Widow,' on 'Anti-Untouchability' and on 'Woman in the Brahma Samaj' surpassingly lift the commonplaces of Social Reform from the low levels of expediency, efficiency and even equity up to the most exalted altitude of inherent unity in and through the Spirit. And as the first address in the section begins with the weighty declaration, "Religion should amplify and sanctify Morality", so the last, that on 'Higher Morality and Deeper Spirituality,' eloquently sets out, through a complex of ramifications, the cardinal injunction of the Dispensation of the Spirit, whereby hang all the law and the prophets — 'Judge with the heart; and rejoice in the Father of Spirits'. The consideration of this section, which includes a recurring insistence upon Purity as the tap-root of personal, domestic and social bliss, may as well close with the grateful testimony recently borne to ultimate influences by

Dr. S. Muthulakshmi Reddi in her acknowledgment of Andhra responsiveness to legislative efforts against the worse than godless system of the *devadasi* (so-called). "I have found", she writes, "that the people of Andhradesa are fully awake to the need for such reforms, as the seeds of the Social Purity Movement sown by such noble sons of Andhradesa as the late Rao Bahadur K. Veeresalingam Pantulu and our revered brother, Sir R. Venkata Ratnam Naidu Garu had taken deep root in this fertile soil and fructified by the time that its daughters came forward demanding that their sex be freed from the many disabilities that they had been subject to for ages".

The Services and Sermons, the Prayers and Meditations, covered by the next two sections, provide so much of pure, spiritual manna, the true savour and strength of which can alone be realised—enjoyed and assimilated—by souls that have feasted at high tables. The all-exclusive yet all-embracing reality of the Supreme Spirit-God transcendent and immanent; the all-engaging and all-unified variegations in the effulgence of the Divine attributes metaphysical and moral; the ineffable yet ineffaceable unity-in-difference between the one Absolute and the manifold of relative existences natural and spiritual; the multi-myriad manifestations and meanings of cosmic energy and soul-evolution as in the vision beatific; the infinite worth because of the immortal destiny of the human self awake or asleep; the inviolable sanctities of home and church, nation and race, with their entire round of sacraments personal and corporate; the ever-inspiring

intimacies of communings with the In-Soul and out-pourings before the Over-Soul in closet and congregation—and what not of the best and beautifullest—are among the exhaustless sources of all that uncommon amplitude of sentiment and affluence of language in the devotional self-expression of the ‘Man of God’, old Saadis *Murd-e-Khuda*.

“When I have Thee, I have my All”. As thus voiced in the opening Service on *Karuna and Santhi*, such is, throughout, the prevailing master-passion of the heart characterised in one of the Birth-day Family Services as “the feeling, throbbing heart, the longing, yearning heart, the heart that hungers with passionate love for Thee, the heart that would curse itself as widowed without Thee, the heart that would writhe with unutterable anguish if divorced from Thee”. Consequently, even as Faith liveth in and by Resignation, the corollary to this craving for, and satisfaction in, God’s self-donation is seized from the significant story of ‘The Two Hermits’ with its counsel of ‘Trust Him for All’. So, too, that other master-piece entitled ‘Religion and Life’, based on ‘A Parable’ from Lowell, is used to outline a sublimely spiritual and comprehensively inward ideal of pure religion undefiled. “What is Religion but the spirit which, on the living tablet of the heart with its ample record of joys and sorrows, engraves at the top ‘God the Parent’? It is not an isolated fact, a specific occurrence; but a pervading sense, a permeating consciousness, an inwoven experience, through all the details of life”. Again, how incomparably the anecdote about Tauler from Whittier is laid under contribution

to bring home the transcendental truth of "Darkness the Shadow of Providence", Providence "the peep of Purpose through the cloud of Chance" and Chance itself (to change the symbol) the very pseudonym of God ! Accordingly, on this terribly, nay, tenderly live issue, we are privileged to perceive how the best sermons are always autobiographical in that the genuine preacher reveals and gives himself, passing on to others what he has first made his own. As for the group of Prayers proper, they bear the stamp of classic worth as fine and finished yet spontaneous and soul-enrapturing models for divers passages in life's pathway—birth-day return or bodily bereavement, meditative study or institutional ceremony, social commingling or spiritual intercourse. But why this vain strain of analysis and animadversion ? Before the banquet of elixir, the hum of detached thought had better subside simply into the hush of immersed enjoyment.

The concluding section, devoted to the study of personalities, is by far rich in import, if rather meagre in content. It begins, in the first discourse (that of 1925) on Rajah Ram Mohan Roy, with an impressive specification of the 'modern spirit' and its envisagement in the *yugapurusha*, the seer-prophet of the epoch, whom the poet seer of the day proclaims as "one of the 'Immortal Personalities' of modern time." It rings with echoes of "the morning-song heard by Ram Mohan in all the sweetness and symphony of its full chorus". It reflects "the glory of the Archetype of the modern universalists who hold that the citizenship of Heaven is chartered to no sectaries but only to 'believers'". It

recognises in Ram Mohan the reincarnated reminder of the age that, as between nation and nation, each "is an indispensable section of the mosaic of the human race; and each does and must contribute its distinct aspect to make complete the beauty of the universal frame". It witnesses, too, how, as between himself and his successors, "he revealed and represented the potentialities of the modern age, while his successors have only followed the pursuits evolved out by those potentialities." The second address (that of 1908) on the same pioneer and patriarch presents a highly suggestive complement on the historic side with the averment that "if Ram Mohan can claim his descent from the ancient *rishis*, the Theistic Dispensation can claim for itself a source as far-reaching as the Rig-Veda" and, as did Mahadev Govinda Ranade, to rank Ram Mohan as "but one of the founders of the Theistic Church in India". It brings into relief the "glaring contrast" between "a conception of God spiritually so grand, so sublime, so exalting and yet, side by side with it, a ceremonialism deplorably gross and degrading". It goes on to emphasise how, even because "spiritual worship is the birth-right of every soul", the Father of the Bramha Samaj, with a full century's pre-vision of the present-day temple-entry *satyagraha* for the 'depressed classes', "introduced congregational worship to show that unto every man the door is open, the lamp burning and the conch sounding, as they invite and greet one and all." Thus, it enforces the threefold mission of Ram Mohan as consisting in "interpreting the past, invigorating

the present and forecasting the future''. Finally, it glorifies, in quite an exquisite picture, the trio of dimensions in the soul of true greatness—its height, its breadth and its depth. Thus the end of Volume V aptly connects itself with the beginning of Volume I on 'the Spirit of Rajah Ram Mohan Roy'—ever a prolific theme with the Master.

All in all, this new, recondite Manual of Theistic Doctrine and Devotions sets the crown upon the prized series that commenced a decade ago. With the hand upon this all too virile volume and the eye upon those hoary snows of seventy winters, who, indeed, can fail to enter somewhat into the significance of St. Paul's buoyant affirmation that though the outward man decay, yet the inward man is renewed day by day, or of Swedenborg's mystic paradox that the angels in heaven grow younger as they wax older? For, in the happy phrasing of the Rev. Dr. J. T. Sunderland—himself an octogenarian optimist, "as the river advances towards the sea, it ripples and dances less with laughter and song; it grows stiller and calmer; but it also grows wider and deeper and bears richer freight on its bosom". Well may we judge of the soaring spirit not alone by the grace and the energy of the flight but also by the power of keeping on the wing. How it turns out here with our fount of inspiration to be 'Ever Immanuel; never Ichabod'! The leading ideas shine forth as luminous centres whence radiates a warmth of pregnant thought on the finer issues of life. With a thorough mastery over what may be termed applied phenomenology, this singular composite of the Vedantic

Sage, the Vaishnava Devotee, the Christian Saint and the Moslem Sufi in the Brahmie 'Brahmarshi'—thus we hail the well-earned distinction with which the Septuagesima is being signalised—is engaged—how profoundly and profitably!—in tracing the One amid the many, the cosmic out of the chaotic, the constant behind the contingent, the spiritual beneath the natural, the providential in the normal, the saved within the sinning, and, in fine, the soul of good in things evil! Replete with words breathing wondrous wisdom and effective potency, there is scarcely a sentence—in the pithy aphoristic or in the elaborate declamatory form—but informs the mind, quickens the heart and refreshes the soul, as it pleases the ear, captivates the imagination and haunts the memory. So, in these days when landmarks are being forcibly obliterated, beacons indifferently left unlighted and buoys wantonly cast adrift, let every part of the work before us fulfil its high purpose, as it eminently can, by instilling into us the wholesome lesson to bear much and pray more, to sublimate life and sanctify death—to endure life with meekness, enjoy it with thankfulness, exalt it into sacredness and extend it into everlastingness.

In the tranquil evening shade along the cool, sequestered vale, there is little to note by way of bringing the life story up to date in its outer aspects. Whereas the Andhra University had, by general acclaim, honoured itself in the first recipient of its Honorary Degree of Doctor of Literature and, later, but narrowly missed the prospects of his pilotage as an experienced Vice-Chancellor, the parent University of Madras, in

its turn, redeemed itself, amidst wide-spread satisfaction, by the conferment, in August last, of the rare distinction of Doctor of Laws *in honoris causa* upon its own Ex-Vice-Chancellor in the conspicuous company of accredited representatives of eminence in varied spheres. A word of melancholy reference is also due to the sudden stroke of personal bereavement, the second of its kind, which deeply stirred the inmost depths—the loss of one of the cherished foster-daughters of the heart-home, poor Lokanayakamma.

In closing, we recall the holy yet humble self-appraisement of the *ushakeerthan* prayer of last birthday, which introduces the third section of the volume under the reminiscential caption, '*Bhai, Allah Hai*': "Through the whole process of these years now taking up the last unit to complete the seventh decade, the one impressive conviction has been borne in upon me that Thou dost possess me for Thy own purpose, all through mere, pure grace". Such being our largess in the man, the message and the ministrations, can we at all over-estimate, on our part,

" The breezes from celestial hills,
The draughts from deeper springs.
The sense of an immortal trust,
The touch of angel wings" ?

<p><i>Maharnavami,</i> 8th October, 1932.</p>	}	<p>V. RAMAKRISHNA RAO.</p>
---	---	----------------------------

ADDRESS

AND

ARTICLES

Om !

I

SOME IMPLICATIONS OF LOVE. *

(1930)

Sisters and Brothers in the Household of the
Universal Father,

From the ancient world comes a pretty anecdote of Chinese origin that a certain seeker after truth presented himself before a revered teacher and said, 'Can you sum up all the books for me in one word?'. The prompt reply was 'Reciprocity', paraphrased into '*Atmavathsarva-bhoothani*' and, again, into 'Do unto others as you would be done by'. Thus the sum-total of the moral code was condensed into that one word—Reciprocity. If Religion should amplify and sanctify Morality, as the moral code could be summed up into the one word, 'Reciprocity', so the essence of the whole body of religious truth could be distilled into the single word, 'Charity' in the

* At the Andhra Theistic Conference, Pithapuram, with Rao Sahib Dr. V. Ramakrishna Rao as President (28-12-30).

classic sense of 'Love'. There is warrant enough for this statement from one of the great leaders of the Brahma Samaj, the venerable Babu Raj Narayan Bose, the right-hand man of Maharshi Devendra-nath Tagore. If he were asked to describe Brahmaism in one word, that word, he said, should be 'Love'.

Now, what is the first implication of this proposition that Religion, the whole domain of it, consists in Love? It is not the wisdom, not the power, not the omnipresence—none of these noteworthy attributes—of God, but it is His love and love alone that can furnish a valid explanation for the existence of the universe and provide an adequate ground and an enduring stamina for it. Wisdom may plan but cannot create. Power may create but cannot design. Similarly, the other modes of possible Divine self-expression will be found rather circumscribed in some way. It is all-comprehensive Love, into which enters the wisdom, not of cunning inquisition, but of penetrating insight, and flows the might, not of the propelling machine, but of the evolving spirit, that can account for the creation of the world. The whole building material, so to speak, of the universe is Love. To continue the figure, the entire edifice,

from the basal concrete to the crowning cupola, consists of the substance of Love. If creation is the 'life-garment' of the Deity, Love forms the warp and woof of that translucent fabric. The metaphysics of creation can be satisfactorily expounded only on the principle of Love, which connotes both the ardour and the resource—the wish and the will—the design and the delight—to create. All other possibilities of activity stop short somewhere. It is Love alone that constitutes the ceaseless spring—the inexhaustible reserve—of both the wisdom and the power to create. Therefore it is we say that, as against the scientist with his law and system, the philosopher with his cause and consequence and the historian with his process and result, the religionist alone rightly appraises the universe as the emanation—the self-expression—of Divine Love. We understand the meaning of Philosophy itself when we construe it in terms of Love. Strip any statement of truth of this one vital element of love and it becomes not only infidelity but aridity itself. Love alone is fecund, productive, multiplicative, reciprocative. Accordingly, the first implication of Love is that creation can be accounted for only as the offspring of Love. And this is not a latter-day belief. It has been the message of the great, the inspired ones

of all ages and countries. Everywhere, the true seer has declared that God, moved by impelling love, has brought the world into being. Be it noted, in passing, as the basic truth of this theme, that the God of Love is the Supreme Person—*Paramapurusha*, owning in unbounded amplitude the distinguishing faculty of introspecting, energising and organising personality—namely, awareness of self, perception of non-self and comprehension of the ‘twain’ in the unity of being, of conjugate life and confluent love. Love is ‘an unsubstantial dream’, a fanciful figment, except as repositied in, and welling up from, a person.

The second implication is: If we desire a free and welcome access to God, it must be only through the gate of Love. It is with the outreaching heart of love alone we can rise up to our God. Under all conditions, be they of elation or of depression, of satisfied fulness or of starving privation, God becomes desirable and available only when He is realised as the God of Love. As the God of Wisdom, we esteem Him; as the God of Might, we obey Him; even as the God of Holiness, we revere Him. Only as the God of Love do we confide and rejoice in Him. That saintly anchoress, Julian, notes how Truth sees, Wisdom

beholds, and Love has a holy, marvelling delight in, God. If there is to be provided unhesitating accessibility to God for one and all, it must be through the inviting portal of Love. What has already been indicated is merely the obverse side of this truth—namely, if it is through love alone that God can be gained by all, He must be the God of Love thus to be gained. To seek affinity, through a particular sentiment, with one whose predominant quality is different—that is not sagacity, not even policy. The characteristic of the Creator which comprises and focusses in itself all His other characteristics is Love. And the God of Love creates the world through the innate urge of Love; and He is accessible to His creatures through the welcoming entrance of Love. All this is summed up in the Fatherhood of God—not merely creation but self-reproduction, not detached manufacturing but intimate self-imparting. Therefore, the God of Love is that Creator who gives Himself in and through creation. The God of Love as the Creator is not a far-off God whose fiat brought the world into being and who has veiled Himself after having enunciated laws and disclosed them to certain receptive minds. He is not only the creating but also the companioning, continuing and completing God. In the

opening verse of our *Goshtiprardhana*, we own that God is, first of all, the Creator; then, the Continuer; next, the Unifier; and finally, the Perpetuator. *Namasthey sathethey jagathkaranaya*—the ever-real Creator; *Namasthey chithey sarvalokasrayaya*—the ever-vivifying Protector; *Namodvaithathathwaya mukthipradaya*—the all-harmonising Emancipator; *Namo Brahmaney vyapiney saswathaya*—the eternal Perpetuator. He is at once the originating Cause, the protecting Providence, the unifying Harmoniser, the progressive Emancipator and the everlasting Perpetuator. He is alike the self-expressing, the self-donating, the self-realising and the self-resuming God. We have to recognise this as the essence of religion that God figures forth in creation, unfolds the process of evolution, converges into the harmony of a multiplex unity and for ever abides in love and manifests Himself in love and, therefore, becomes accessible only through and unto love.

The third implication is this. If it is a God of Love that is the Creator of the universe, all His laws—and they are only His uniform ways, not once for all, but momentarily, promulgated—must be closed up in the one law, ‘the Law of Love’. Love is creation’s final law, albeit Nature *appear*

red in tooth and claw and her volcanoes rage forth in devastating lava. Accordingly, for me as for Himself, God has for ever ordained the self-same law of love. Thou shalt conduct thyself in love; thou shalt judge by love; thou shalt determine all standards of valuation in the spirit of love; thou shalt accept love as the prime law of thy life; even as God, in His own governance, rules according to the universal law of love. All other so-called laws are, not God's ordained edicts, but man's misreadings of God's ways. The law of barbarism with its 'tooth for tooth and eye for eye; even the law of reciprocity with its 'give and take,' and, indeed, the law of equality with its 'I as thee and thou as me'—all these merely temporise, more or less. In truth, there is one and only one section in the Code of God—namely, Love. As the poet has observed, from inception to perfection it is all 'Give love, live love'. What is the unique characteristic of Love? It gives; it lives; it never asks for any return or recognition. Ever giving, never demanding—this is writ large on the illumined scroll of Nature. As a well-known Indian chant has it—shines not the sun for its own glory; flows not the river for its own benefit; stands not the tree for its own comfort; lives not the good man for his own

profit. As the sun shines and asks for no recognition, as the river flows and demands no reward, as the tree affords shade and looks for no recompense, so the good man, under the Heaven-sanctioned Code of Love, gives ever and demands never. In a certain exceedingly instructive novel, the servant says, 'Master is good to all but one'; and the Master puts it down to the old, old complaint of servants about their neglect by their masters. But, in truth, the servant's idea is that Master takes thought of all except his own self. In a sublime sense, Love always takes thought of every one save the self. God takes thought of all except Himself. How profound, then, the Love of God—to shower blessings evermore and expect none in return! Of man's incurable discontent we have a confession in the saying: God gives much to many, but not enough to any. That is our chronic complaint. But just as, from God, it is ever giving and never demanding, so the man of God seeks to order his life by the same rule of ever giving and never demanding. The result will be, no doubt, poverty, ever-increasing poverty; but it is that hallowed, blessed poverty which is richer than the amplest wealth. For it is the poverty, not of want, but of complete self-consecration. I possess nothing, not because I am

denuded of possessions, but because it is the luxury of my life not to possess anything for the gratification of the self. In Christian writings there is a reference to marrying Lady-Poverty. As St. Francis of Assisi has said, rich men are waited on by servants and poor men by God Himself. This is divine poverty. And it is this course of life that Religion enjoins by the prompting from within: 'Thou shalt possess nothing but have all!' Here, while on this subject of giving, let me invite attention to one profound observation of Victor Hugo. It is far easier, he declares, to give than to forgive. Most of us are able to give; but how disappointingly few are they that can forgive! And the reason for it is plain enough. When I give, I part with my possessions—perhaps, some superfluities; but when I forgive, I have to give up what I prize as my precious self. As fame is the last infirmity of noble minds, this *aham* (self) is the last possession of most men—hardest to give up. How to forego this coveted self? There is the crux. But to forgive will become as easy as to give, when we are ruled and guided by the Law of Love. And again, to give I have few opportunities; but to forgive I have almost numberless occasions. How often we behave like the child that kicks the chair it knocks against! We knock

against the world ; and then, in a fit of fretfulness, we kick that world which we are placed here below really to kiss. Thus, it is this ubiquitous ghost of self that has to be overmastered. Einstein, as great in spiritual insight as in scientific investigation, observes that the true value of man is assessable by how far, and in what sense, he has succeeded in obtaining freedom from self, that is, in surrendering self to Love. Self has been given, to be neither pampered nor rejected, but to be disciplined into surrender ; just as talent is given, to be neither thrown away nor buried, but to be laid out for the spirit's kith and kin and thus dedicated to Love. Then the human self becomes an integral part of the Divine Self. That is the spousal of the Deity and the devotee in Love. And such is the grace of Love that its charm is plain and patent to one and all. Wisdom may be too deep for most men, but Love is never un-understandable. Says the mystic : God, infinite and absolute, is inaccessible to the Intellect but close and familiar to the Heart. Therefore, man shall greet man, man shall deal with man, under the regimen of Love. Every other rule must fail somewhere and somehow. Love alone can constitute the unifying power and the vivifying and enlarging stimulus of all human relations—

domestic, national and international. Love and Love alone shall be the rule for all the interests and activities of life. For there is something lovable in every one. There exists none with unrelieved repulsiveness. Even the blackest cloud has a silver lining. As a certain profound thinker has said, Love's function is to win the unlovable into loveliness. Love spies out the lovable in the unlovely. Aye, Love transforms every object into the handsome, not merely passable but attractive. And how? By revealing the divinely-designed reciprocities between soul and soul, so that none can do without another. Just as, in the organism of the universe, the minutest satellite is indispensable unto the whole cosmos, so, in the realm of the spirit, there is such intimate interlinking between soul and soul that, for the perfection of any one individual, it is absolutely true that none other can be dispensed with. A wise man was asked from whom he had learnt his wisdom; and his answer was, 'From fools! For, whatever others disliked in them I avoided with care.' Another sage was asked, 'Why do you not sell or give away your troublesome slave?' 'Why, then, I shall lose the opportunity of learning patience'. These stories illustrate the principle of universal reciprocity. From the most unpromising soil, we rear an

abundant harvest of good. According to the Golden Rule of Love, the universe is forged into one compact chain; and to weaken a single link is to impair the strength of the whole. Consequently, he who would attain to the God of Love must not merely tolerate but esteem the humblest handiwork of the God of Love. Hence, the standard and the test that will be applied to us on the day of reckoning: 'Have you loved well?'—not 'How much have you learnt?', or 'How much have you achieved?', or even 'How much have you given?'. To that dread question from the Judgment-throne, he who can answer, 'I have tried my utmost to live love'—he alone can face the ordeal.

Briefly to sum up, in closing. The edifice of the entire universe is constructed with the substance of Love, not of Wisdom or of Power. Therefore, the particular characteristic of God which shall be our supreme thought and sure knowledge of God is that He is the God of Love. And the only way to the realisation of God is through the avenue of Love. If, then, our approach to God be possible and free only through the avenue of Love, it must be a love that gives all and demands nought. Such love leads

to divine poverty—lacking nothing, for {it would save nothing for the self. Love is the divining-rod of the soul to discover the secret springs of heavenly grace and the hidden treasures of human worth. The refreshing showers, the bracing zephyrs, the entrancing fragrances, the enchanting notes, the enrapturing sights — all are *my* possessions. I hold them in ‘fee simple’. Who dare call me poor, with these imperishable possessions? When God has granted {me the ‘second-sight’ of love with which I can behold the priceless pearl in the dew-drop, enjoy regal glory in the rain-bow and treasure (in Rabindranath’s good-tidings) flowers as the love-missives of the Beloved inscribed in coloured ink on living enamel—why, to call that poverty is an outrageous misnomer. Poverty for Love is wealth itself. He who owns this poverty gives of himself abundantly in proportion to the increase of his poverty. As for the still harder exercise of forgiveness, he forgives, too, no less readily and freely, as he grows in this poverty through Love. Rather, he feels he has no need to forgive at all. For, when did he take any offence that he has now to forgive? Have we not heard that blissful story about Tukaram?—how, returning home with a bundle of sugarcanes a disciple had presented to him one

evening, he parted with all the canes but one to the persons he met with on the way and, at length, on reaching home with the one solitary cane, he was confronted by his wife, a sharp-tongued Xanthippe, with the query, 'Who could be that niggardly creature that presented you with this single stick?' Then, as he explained the facts, she belaboured him with that very cane; and as it broke into two pieces, he picked up one and exclaimed, 'You, as a very loving wife, must share even this single sugarcane with your husband'. If, thus, there is no occasion to forgive, there is, however, every occasion to give. Innumerable are the opportunities God grants for the exercise of Love. Have we not heard of the Greek slave-sage, Epictetus?—how his master was hard-hearted and, for some slight lapse on his part, put his leg into the torturing machine? Says the sage, 'Don't you apply it too hard. I shall, at that rate, become a cripple and be of no use to you hereafter?' With the broken leg, in old age, he can say, 'You, younger men, may go about freely and enjoy the blessings of life. Grey-haired and lame, I am thankful I can sit down and glorify my God.' There is a mistake — a confusion — in the thought that he who loves man thereby loves God. The cardinal principle is: Love God and not another in

His stead ; and love Him for His own sake. A certain *Sufi* states that there are but three steps between man and God : with the first, kick away this world ; with the second, kick away the next world ; and with the third, you stand before God Himself. The poet sings of ‘ the kindred points of heaven and home ’. But let us rise a step higher and say, ‘ the single point of heaven and home ’. Detach Home from Heaven, and Home is a prison-cell ; detach Heaven from Home, and Heaven is a mirage. Heaven is Home, and Home is Heaven. When we not only come into life in love and continue in life in love but live in the home in love, can we imagine a higher Heaven ? Said a mystic : In Islamic cosmogony, there are seven skies and eight heavens. ‘ If so, where are they located ? ’ ‘ Seven of the eight heavens are in the seven skies, and the eighth is in your heart ’. When that eighth heaven—the highest heaven, aye, the true heaven—has been received into thee, thou art, not a denizen of heaven, but the abode of heaven. So God is not in Heaven ; but Heaven is in God—Heaven is God Himself. The final test, then, is : To what extent have I surrendered self to Love ? To the extent to which I am able to say, ‘ Lord ! Lord ! Through the grace of Thy imparting, I have caught a whisper of the ineffable

truth, *Brahma Kripahi Kevalam*': God is Love alone, or, as they have it in Tamil scripture—*Anbey Sivam*. Not in figure of speech or in suggestive symbol but in the barest fact, in the simplest truth, God is Love itself. He who has received this Gospel of Love bears the image of God mirrored in his soul. He becomes an integral part of God. And they that are thus integrated with God and in God—what are they not? *Amrithasya puthrah*! 'All are the undying offspring of one Sire.'

II

PRE-VACATION ADVICE TO YOUTHFUL WORSHIPPERS

(1907)

The object which brings us together in these gatherings is in its nature, not literary, scientific or social, commendable though that be in itself, but something more far-reaching, more abiding—even the purpose to realise our relation with God. Life is a premeditated and preordered process. It is a sacred trust. A life of worship is an indissoluble link between God and man. Life comes to be truly worth living, only as we vividly realise this great truth.

Having regard to this supreme end and aim of life itself, it will, in the long vacation now before you, be your imperative, if humble, duty to strive hard and lay deep the foundations of a sound character. The result can be seen only in the years to come. Now you are to realise how

* Substance of a summer-term valedictory discourse to the Young Men's Prayer Union, Cocanada.

engaging and uplifting is the task at hand. A young man's hope is not marred by disappointments. No joy, no aspiration, can be like the joy, the aspiration, of a genial and spirited youth. And no will, too, can be like the will of a pure-hearted and resolute youth. Thoughtful resoluteness lies at the basis of all success. It is resoluteness that developes manliness. The good-will and happiness infused into the constitution of your being—even physical being, offer such rich opportunities for growth and strength, provided you learn to associate life with God. Youth is the period of life when energy is abundant and joyousness is genuine. And if you rightly use your precious talent now, it will be a blessing unto your future.

How are you to conduct yourselves as systematic worshippers? Religion is an intensely solemn, a surpassingly supreme, concern of life. It is not to be trifled with. It must be treated with seriousness and solemnity. If Religion is an impressive reality, its influence must be borne into all the concerns of life. You must maintain a constant relationship with God in order to make Religion a potent reality exercising its beneficent influences. And to this end you should chasten

your physical appetites and respect the dictates of your conscience. The negative side of Religion is to fight with sin though not with the sinner, with selfishness though not with the self-seeker. The positive side of Religion is to make it a reality both in high estate and low, in health and sickness, in joy and sorrow, in prosperity and adversity. Religion does not consist merely in morning and evening prayers; nor does prayer consist in the utterance of elegant words or even fine sentiments. Prayer is the soul's pledge to God to seek and do His will.

There are three ways in which you could cultivate your better self, especially in the recess term now opening out before you, in order to make Religion a living force in life.

1. Study.—You may not study directly religious books. But you ought, one and all, to study any useful book in a religious spirit. If you can, study the *Gita* and the *Upanishads*. Nothing is to my understanding, more sublime or inspiring than the *Isopanishad*. Study the Sermon on the Mount and the Parable of the Prodigal Son. They will invigorate you marvellously. Other books that may be suggested are: "The Religion of

Brahman," "Gleams of the New Light," "Heart-Beats," "The Hymns of Kabir" and "The Verses of Vemana."

2. **Daily Worship.**—Worship, as already observed, links man on to God. God is the Judge of the heart and not of the speech. According to the ever-venerated Maharshi Devendranath Tagore, 'loving God and doing acts that God loves constitute His worship.' We shall worship Him, then, both in thought and with deed. This means growth within and growth without. Worship is the felt contact of the heart with God. It is the living sap which carries nutrition to the whole being. Let Worship stand above all things, be held the greatest of all realities. Worship is primarily the dedication of my heart to God, and thence the reproduction of God in me. It should not be a task but a joy. Youth is the best time to cultivate this spirit of Worship, since your genial heart is readily attuned to Prayer. Develop this habit, and your entire growth will be rich and sound.

3. **Strength of Will.**—At times, you have to put these questions to yourselves: 'So far as my responsibility goes, shall I do this or shall I do the opposite of this?' 'In my worship, should I not

be sincere?' And where you find yourselves unable to conform, your aim should be, not rebellion, but righteous self-consistence through resoluteness. You should be self-reliant that you may face life's ordeals.

As worshippers, your main task for the vacation is to make your life of prayer genuine. Your vacation will prove a period of decay, and not of growth, if you do not develop yourselves into worthier—wiser, stronger and devouter—youths in every respect. God bless you, one and all !

Om ! Thath Sath !

III

THE CHILD-WIDOW

(1931)

ESTEEMED CHAIRMAN AND FRIENDS,

I will begin with a little story. You have probably heard of the late Dewan Bahadur K. Krishnaswami Rao, who was for a long time a District Judge and, perhaps, for a while also an Acting High Court Judge. I happened once to travel in the same compartment with him. We were passing between Godavari and Rajahmundry Stations. As we neared our High School Buildings, he asked, 'What is that?' 'That is Veeresalingam High School.' 'Has he also a High School? I thought his one great work was Widow-marriage and he had a Widows' Home here.' In fact, many that did not know of the other great doings of Veeresalingam Pantulu Garu held him in distinction as the champion of Widow-marriage. His prototype in Bengal, Pandit Iswara Chandra

* In the Town Hall, Rajahmundry, Rao Bahadur T. Bhagavantam Gupta Garu, B.A., B.L., presiding, in commemoration of the Golden Jubilee of the First Widow-marriage in Andhradesa (11-12-1931).

Vidyasagar, eminent as a man of letters, distinguished as an educationist and renowned as a philanthropist, himself valued his own work in the Widow-marriage cause as his greatest achievement. What Vidyasagar thus stated in self-estimation may also truly be said of Veeresalingam Pantulu Garu. His several achievements have been recalled either in detail or in allusion by the preceding speakers this evening. The greatest of all those is the practical and vigorous promulgation, in Andhradesa—indeed, in South India, of the primary right of widows to remarry, if they choose. Let me stress this point. When we desire to estimate correctly the character and the worth of Pantulu Garu's life and work, we should prominently bear this in mind that his noblest accomplishment is the securing of the franchise for widows to remarry, if they so desire.

My next point is this. In these days, everywhere—almost "from every mouth"—is to be heard a regretful reference to the question of 'Untouchability'. This curse, we are told, must be removed from the country, if the nation is to make real progress. But is Untouchability of one kind only? Is not Widow-marriage prohibition also a type of Untouchability? Here is a girl in sound health

and in the bloom of youth ; she has every requisite for being a help-mate to a young man ; unfortunately, she is a widow and, therefore, untouchable. Untouchability assuming various forms, even as the leper cannot be touched on hygienic grounds, numberless girls are, for no real defect, pronounced untouchable for marital purposes ! But if India is to achieve true freedom, this species of Untouchability also must be removed as assiduously as the Untouchability of the ' Depressed Classes '.

There is a third point. Rajah Ram Mohan Roy is held to have done great good in bringing about the abolition of *Sati*. All honour to him for it ! But to save from instant death and then to condemn to unrelieved misery all the life long, is no solution whatsoever of the problem of the young widow. If there really is anything to be esteemed as praiseworthy in Ram Mohan's act, it should be supplemented, as it has been sought to be by the work of Vidyasagar, Vishnu Sastri and Veeresalingam—namely, by obtaining free and full support from society for the young widow to set up again a dear home of her own, if she is so minded. Then alone Ram Mohan's work will have been successfully accomplished. *Sati* abolished but Widow-marriage forbidden, is only a shift out of



the frying-pan into the fire. Every one of us, while praising Rajah Ram Mohan Roy for his work in the abolition of *Sati*, assumes thereby the responsibility to see that the reformatory work does not stop short with rescue from *Sati* and that the widow shall not be condemned to a life-long burning of the heart. 'Better marry than burn', says the Apostle of God; whereas we, callous-hearted votaries of cruel custom, say in effect, 'Better burn than marry'! This is life-long torture, infinitely severer than consuming with flames a woe-begone frame that can set no store by life. *Sati* gone in the scheme of social uplift, India has accepted the obligation to obtain for crores of women the right to marry of their own free-will. And to how many, and how long, and how culpably, that freedom has been persistently denied!

That is the next point. How vast, how widespread is this evil! Years ago, on the basis of the Census records, out of every six Hindu women one was noted to be a widow. The enormity of the evil is further disclosed by the dreadful fact that there were eight hundred of that oppressed sex who had become widows even before the very first year of life had been completed. Then,

imagine the gigantic proportions of this inhuman custom by reckoning up widows below fifteen years of age. You will require an area thrice the size of Madras City, if all the widows under that age limit were assembled together. There we have the tremendously tragic extent and effect of this baleful custom of ban upon Widow-marriage. Does it not, then, cry for redemption even on peril of damnation for us all ?

Another point is this. It has been said that if you look at a row of telegraph posts, there comes upon you an ocular illusion. The nearer posts appear far apart, and *vice versa*. Something similar is the illusion we are subject to, when we try to imagine the awful anguish which every pioneer of reform had to endure before he could achieve even a small measure of success. In our day we find Widow-marriage has become a comparatively easy business, though it is, in truth, not quite so easy, after all, as we are prone to fancy in our seclusion. Therefore, we are apt to take it for granted that it was equally easy when the Reform was first started. This is very much like imagining that, because the pilgrimage to Benares has become such an easy affair for us in these latter days, it must have been equally easy even unto those who had literally to

measure out every foot of the weary way in the olden days when Kasi and Cremation-ground were associated, in thought, as equally fatal. Widow-marriage at the beginning of the Reform was not like Widow-marriage in our time. It was a question of life and death—a veritable *Kurukshetra* fight, all the powers of darkness arrayed in opposition to the single torch-bearer of truth with his challenge—‘You shall vanish or I will perish!’ It required a leonine heart—indeed, a divine heart, to endure that struggle. Such a leonine heart, such a divine heart, was lodged in our revered Veeresalingam Pantulu Garu, as, indeed, no one can ever achieve anything of real worth unless he receives the holy impetus from on high. I will give you a little story. The reminiscence being personal, I will state it in general terms. Intimation of a certain happening was once given to Pantulu Garu. He simply said, ‘I knew it’. He had not really received the information already. What did he mean, then? He was asked. And the answer came, ‘Why, ours is a just cause! I knew it would win, without doubt!’ Such deep-rooted, whole-hearted conviction he had in regard to the all-overpowering principle of Justice. As Carlyle insists, this universe is under the rule of One who is the eternal enemy of injustice. When some ministers of

IV

THE APPROACH TO SHAKESPEARE

(1913)

It has been said, and rightly said, that Shakespeare's Works are the 'Lay-Bible' of the English-speaking people. And 'the English-speaking people' denotes about half the population of the world. In our general talk, there is the very misleading assumption that 'the English-speaking people' comprises a few millions confined to a small island in the west of Europe. But that is far from the fact. There is no region but contains representatives of the English-speaking people. English is spoken in the icy zones; it is spoken in the temperate climes; it is spoken in the torrid tracts. In the north, it is spoken far up in Canada; in the south, it is spoken far down in Australasia. It is spoken throughout the vast United States of America. It is spoken by large numbers everywhere in India. It is spoken all over South Africa. It is spoken by not a few even in Japan and China. Thus, you find that the

English Language is the widest-spread tongue on the earth. And in the world-wide realm of English Letters, at the highest peak, the loftiest apex, is installed the exalted name of Shakespeare. His spirit is the all-unifying bond of sympathy and affinity between millions upon millions of our race. In fact, Shakespeare's spirit exemplifies his own dictum, 'One touch of Nature makes the whole world kin.' It is, as it were, the golden girdle encircling the globe. If only you exercise your imagination and attempt to think of India *minus* the English Language, you will be able to realise the immense value, the rare worth, of the repository of practical wisdom which that language has acquired for us through its master-representatives like Shakespeare. This practical wisdom is nowhere so richly stored, so abundantly garnered, as in Shakespeare. Carlyle has said that if the average Englishman were to be asked, 'Shakespeare or the Indian Empire—which would you choose?', the ready answer would be, 'Indian Empire or no Indian Empire, we cannot do without our Shakespeare'. The study of Shakespeare is one of the highest privileges, as it is one of the greatest advantages, for us all. How wide-spread and how intense the study of Shakespeare has been, you may be able to realise from the fact that the most appreciative

criticism of Shakespeare has come not so much from England as from Germany, from Denmark, from France, from America and from some other countries. In the modern world, there can exist hardly any one that can lay pretensions to literary scholarship who will yet dare confess that he has not cared to make the acquaintance of Shakespeare. In India to-day there is no scholar who can bear the hall-mark of a University without acknowledging his appreciation of Shakespeare. There are, of course, many graduates who have not read of Shakespeare beyond the single play prescribed for their examination but who, all the same, do not hesitate to speak with admiration of Shakespeare and to cite the authority of Shakespeare !

The study of Shakespeare is a study of life—of the great issues, the profound problems, of life. Do not think of it as an infliction and an imposition, a burden cast upon you by a feelingless University. Accept it as a hospitable invitation to a most substantial intellectual and spiritual feast. Think of it as a favourite study and not as a dreary task—an inevitable evil. The best way to show your appreciation of, and your reverence for, Shakespeare is to study him closely, to study him deeply, to study him with zest, to study him

with enjoyment. It is said that the proof of the pudding is in the eating ; that is, if you merely sit before the pudding and pronounce it to be very nice, your praise will be empty, while your self-deprivation will be solid. Would you value the pudding, then you must taste it and relish it. Likewise, if you come and sit here, dosing away some hours week in and week out, you show irreverence to the hallowed spirit of Shakespeare. Therefore, read him intently with the confidence that the more you read, the richer will be the benefits you owe to him. Shakespeare is an inexhaustible mine of wisdom which you may work throughout life and yet leave untouched in a large portion. So I would ask you, at the outset, to realise the solemnity—I may say, the sanctity—of the study on which we are entering. The spirit—the profound thought, the sublime sentiment, the vast outlook and the consummate art—of Shakespeare, I understand so imperfectly, and as from me you will realise yet more imperfectly. So it is, and will be, a gradation of imperfections. Be it so ; yet do you apply yourselves to the study with stintless zeal. The study of Shakespeare is not a mere fraction of your examination-task : it is an essential factor of your life. I may tell you, confess to you, that I dreamt last night that I was

preparing the Shakespeare lesson for you. This morning, as I was actually working at it, I did feel I was entering upon a noble occupation of life. If you have the opportunity of introducing an eager inquirer to a distinguished and honoured person, do you not feel it a high privilege unto yourself? So, every teacher values the privilege of introducing the eager, inquiring student to Shakespeare—the foremost of the Immortals. A renowned poet was asked, it is said, by his king how he could compose so rich a volume of such superb poetry; and he replied that the august presence of the sovereign inspired his spirit with poetry. There is much truth in this inspiration from sovereign souls. One gets enraptured in the presence of Shakespeare and is warmed into enthusiasm over the study. It is not, then, proper to acclaim the humble exponent; but the right mind is to admire the profundity of the author who is being expounded. There are occasions when the interpreting teacher may loom into prominence as a guide. But he ought to be passed by, to yield due prominence to the author himself whose study is the connecting link of cordial fellowship between the teacher and his pupils. Do not, on the one hand, sit mute and listless over golden opportunities; nor, on the other, pass on with the glee of curiosity

or even of contentment that Shakespeare has the charm of rousing your teacher to prolonged periods. Learn to realise for yourselves how the gift of insight into Shakespeare's spirit is, not a stale or venal market-commodity, but a deep mine of culture and a perennial fountain of humanity. Shakespeare has come to us, and he has come to live in India. Let him, the myriad-souled, inform and inspire you, all your days.

V

LOVE.

(1914)

REFERENCE—*The Star of Love all stars above, etc.*

This is the prime factor and the essential element in the very building up of the universe. The love that works as a charm and a talisman in human life; the love that is treasured up in its various expressions as deep faith in the devotee, as tender humanity in the philanthropist, as selfless service in the patriot or as tireless solicitude in the mother; the love that steels the heart against all danger, guides the soul to unperceived virtues and excellences, quickens the feelings into anticipative sympathies, nerves the will into unflinching fortitude—what is that love, after all? This is the mystery of mysteries, the miracle of miracles. It may briefly be stated to take three general aspects. There is the self-denying love. Next, there is the self-surrendering love. And lastly, there is the self-dedicating love. With the mother it is the self-denying love.

With the wife it is the self-surrendering love. And with the devotee it is the self-dedicating love. Is a sacrifice demanded? 'Me before him,' that is the mother; 'Me, not him,' that is the wife; 'Me unto Him,' that is the devotee. These, of course, are not the only relations in which love is witnessed. On different occasions it may appear in diverse relations. For instance, the son may rise to be so splendid, so glorious, that the mother grows into a trusting child before him. Again, 'I believe in you,' said Ayesha to Mahammad. Here the wife grew into a loyal disciple. 'Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him'—that is the acme of the devotee's surrender. After all, whatever form it may take, whether you call it affection in the mother or attachment in the wife or reverence in the devotee, at bottom there is the same marvellous spirit. How versatile is the genius of Love! In a well-known Sanskrit verse, one type of Love—the wife-love—is symbolised in its several phases. How many claims to affection and esteem close in the true wife! In carrying out behests, she is the faithful maid; in helping with counsel, she is the wise minister; in enduring and forbearing, she is the patient earth; in engaging with winsomeness, she is the charming nymph; in providing with comforts,

she is the fostering mother ; and so on. Equally ample and varied in its adaptability to the exigencies of life is every other type of Love. Love is the soul's celestial *cornucopia*, the soul's heavenly *kalpataru*. Love is the food of the immortals, observes Narada.

VI

BEWARE OF VULGAR TASTE. *

(1916)

(OCCASION—*Some low-toned conversations introduced by Shakespeare here and there to please the palate of the crowd.*)

Those who frequent theatres cannot have the endurance to follow a serious dialogue on the stage, unless it is now and then enlivened by coarse wit and lewd joke. I happened to be in the Library-room of a neighbouring College; and a European friend who was present observed to the Principal, 'This unexpurgated edition of the *Decameron*—why do you allow it here? Isn't it undesirable to let the students take out and read this book?' The Principal answered, 'Oh, no fear. We Indians feed our students with stronger meat than you Europeans'. I simply smiled and said, 'There exists great difference of opinion on that subject.' Sometime back there was a keen controversy, followed by a prosecution launched by the Government themselves, about the moral tone of a well-known Telugu classic. Opinion was

* A class-room talk.

sharply divided. Some said it was objectionable ; others avowed it was literature and could be unhesitatingly read. A certain pleader argued, 'If such works must be condemned and if we cannot overlook the tempting suggestions clothed in artistic language, then, we, men and women, must all be sent to jail if, when tastefully dressed, we fail to conceal our natural physical differences as men and women.' His exact language was more graphic ; but I put it to you in this vaguer form. I had no part in the controversy. I mention this just to show how ingenious people can become when they try to bolster up a bad cause. 'That poor creature, that helpless widow—why do you have her head shaved?', some one asked. And the sapient answer came, 'It is all the better for her, she will not be troubled by lice!' There was a Social Conference at which I presided. We were at the subject of Social Purity. A gentleman who was held to be a great authority on Telugu Literature and on Music, said, 'I agree with Mr. Venkata Ratnam Naidu in all his ideas of Social Reform except this one of Social Purity and Anti-Nautch.' Now, I do not mean to suggest he was a vicious person ; but such was the groove of his thought. I do not presume—God forbid that I should ever presume!—to be by a tiny iota

superior to any one. But to me it is inconceivable how one could ever, without a throb of heart and a qualm of conscience, cast one's eye towards a 'dancing-girl' as she is required to exhibit herself at a Nautch. I confess I feel a shudder pass through the body; and the thought irresistibly comes, 'Is it not my daughter that is standing there?' Just as, when a criminal was being taken to prison, John Wesley is said to have exclaimed, 'There goes John Wesley but for the grace of God!', so also the thought uppermost is, 'There goes my daughter but for the grace of God!' And the case is worse when people actually call for, and listen to, seductive songs, as I once found a numskull do even at a *bhajan* with the exclamation, ఎంత నేపూ యాభజనేనా? ఒక్కజావలీ పాడరా? Thus grows a noxious habit. A blinding cloud of dust, a deluding veil of mist, gathers around the spirit, which loses its native sensitiveness little by little.

(PRASADA RAO) A STUDENT—

'Sir, you said it was wrong to attend a nautch-party. Is it sin to hear the music of a woman?')

Well, Prasada Rao, it comes again to the same thought as I used to present at Masulipatam.

People would ask me, 'Can't we go and hear that music?' And I would merely say, 'Would you allow your own sister to go and herself sing to the crowd? If you would, then I have nothing to say.' A blackguard of a doctor would advise the youth that, if they desired to preserve health, they should give their appetites a little gratification! This advice a preacher once roundly rebuked by saying, 'Will the brute supply his daughter? For, his prescription means contaminating somebody's daughter!' If I feel the act to be a slur upon me, my parents and my family, then, no child of God unto whom is given the same birth-right to feel as I do, should be thus besmirched. It were better, far better, in my humble opinion, that all music should perish, if it could thrive only on the soil of the current unfortunate, vicious practice of *nautch*. Just as you wish all honour should perish, if it should be rooted in dishonour; so let all art perish, if it cannot live unless fed and sustained on contaminating fellowship—erring conduct and unworthy indulgence. Yes; that unfortunate sister—she engages herself to sing and to dance, wholly because she has divested herself of feminine modesty and the public feelinglessly accept the position. If she were not so conditioned, would anybody dare ask her to come and sing and dance? Would not the

call be resented as an insult? Why; another section of that very community, which section, thank God, takes to lawful marriage, would treat it as an insult, if so invited. If to remain unmarried and, what is more, be licensed to feel free in the relations of sex, should be a condition precedent to one's following the profession or excelling in the art of music, how would it be, say, if it were laid down that every one who would excel in drawing should first take to drinking, so that only drunkards could be recognised draftsmen? Would it not be held an outrage on humanity? To me this is an elementary moral rule which needs no argument.

If I ride hard my hobby of Social Purity, it is because I feel assured that Purity is the initiation into, the inauguration of, what we call honour and honourableness. A young man was standing at a street-corner. An unfortunate woman—that is, one whom a monster of a man had first led astray—approached the young man and began to joke with him. The young man turns round and says, 'What do you mean? Are you not ashamed? Have you no fear of God?' This was what once actually happened at Madras. Blessed are the father and the mother of that young man who could turn round and speak out in that strain to a

young woman that was playing the siren to him ! To grin in complacency, to exchange joke for joke in levity—that is going the way, the slippery way, to the quagmire. You begin in a jocund mood—you start by adopting a merry fashion ; and you end by contracting a debasing habit. To slip in may be easy ; to step out is hard. This is a characteristic feature with every one of the physical appetites. But the most abominable feature about this horrid laxity in the relation of the sexes is this, as I have said again and again : all other sins you commit by yourself, but in this you inevitably involve another, you drag in a partner. How terrible is the responsibility if, not content with sinking myself, I push another of God's creatures down the declining gradient of perdition with me ! And it is not merely doing the unspeakable thing in its ultimate consequence that is sinful ; but it is even tolerating its preludes to any extent by smiling at the joke or sharing in the laughter or enduring the levity that leads to the ruin of another. If hiring the body and bartering the soul have to go before the acquisition of the privilege of public singing, to be participators in that singing as willing listeners is to be parties to the prostitution as virtual abettors.

This is, no doubt, a long digression ; but I do not consider it—let me hope it is not— either time lost or breath wasted. Whether you succeed in your University Examination or not, in after-life, by God's grace, you may expect to develop into manly men and win public recognition for that virtue, with the test of true manliness that he alone is manly who will not steal an undue and unfair advantage over any woman. To deprive a widow of her maintenance ; to rob an orphan of its sustenance ; to divest a weak maid of her modesty—as the poet puts it, to pluck the rose from her brow and plant a blister there ; to joke and jeer when a frail woman feels that man, instead of leading, is basely misleading her ; aye, even in wedded life, to treat your honoured spouse as only the handy provision that the convention of custom has afforded for the gross indulgence of carnal appetite, instead of respecting her as the noble partner whom God has ordained to you in the holy duty of sustaining the race—all this is to discredit Heaven and to disgrace humanity. The difference between animal enjoyment and pure love is this, as one of Narada's *Bhakti-Sutras* puts it—enjoyment seeks the gratification of the self, while love promotes the happiness of the partner.

Even in conjugal union, the consort's enjoyment — that is love; one's own gratification — that is passion. Some of you are actually married; others are in prospect of being married; almost every one of you will live the married life, sooner or later. Blessed, blessed are you if, in those days when youth is in full flush and desire for enjoyment is insistent in its demands, you are able to say, in the words of the Upanishad, "*Nava arey jayayai kamaya jaya priyabhavathi. Athmanasthu kamaya jaya priyabhavathi.*" (Verily, a wife is not dear, that you may love the wife: but that you may love the Self, therefore, a wife is dear.)* Maharshi Devendranath Tagore—himself, noble father of worthy children—dreamt on a certain occasion that his deceased mother approached him and, after ascertaining his welfare, stood at a distance and enquired how he was engaged. He replied that he was engaged in doing the behests of the Truth. And she tenderly said, "*Kulam pavithram, jananee kruthardha!*" How enviable the son whose mother can thus bless him! But which mother will deign to pronounce that benediction when the son, with his low tastes, dishonours the sex of that mother? How can he that has

* *Brikadaranyakopanishad*: (Max Muller's translation).

dishonoured the sex of his mother deserve to be blessed by the mother ?

Once more, I do not regret to have given so much of our time to this side-talk. You are nearing the golden threshold. As you cross the threshold, may you cross it, each one of you, not as the wanton self, but as the worshipping soul !

VII

THE NEW TESTAMENT OF SACRIFICE

(1915)

REFERENCE—FROUDE : *England's Forgotten Worthies*.

The Old Testament's offer to man, according to Bacon, is happiness, while the New Testament's offer is sacrifice. The fulfilment of life is not in happiness; it is in sacrifice. A smoothly rounded-off life, budding with the youthful season of preparation, expanding through the adult season of action and ripening into the aging season of self-satisfaction, may be a life of happiness. But that is so only under the Old Testament conception of life. On the other hand, a life of ceaseless, exacting labours to overcome and to outlive untold vicissitudes of privation or affliction, of prejudice or haughtiness, of struggles or ordeals, be they of hostilities without or of temptations within; a life which closes abruptly as if cut off in its mid-career, suggesting an apparent failure, presenting 'a broken arc'—such a life alone is symbolic of the

sacrifice demanded and of the destiny ordained under the New Testament. This unsparing sacrifice furnishes the key-note to every life that really counts in human history. Not he whose life is one spell of encouraging engagements and fruitful accomplishments, but he whose life is one strain of seemingly hopeless efforts and fruitless results, may be said to stand hostage for the credit of Truth. This is the life connoted by the Cross. He who was expected to be the Saviour and Redeemer of a fallen race, who was looked up to as the Deliverer of the Jewish nation from the yoke of Rome and was believed to incarnate in himself the glory of the eternal triumph—he was awarded the bitter cross and the thorny crown with the jeering hail, ‘Behold the King of the Jews!’ And as the very climax of the indignity, he was crucified between two thieves. Betrayed by the trusted, disowned by the beloved, he was doomed to this humiliating death. But twenty centuries witness to his translation from the felon’s grave to the messiah’s glory, with princes and peoples alike bowing the reverent head to him. If there are those who do not recognise in him the sole Saviour of the world, he, nevertheless, commands the profoundest reverence of one and all. In the attainment of ‘the true destiny of the race—namely, to disclose the divinity in

man,' he stands unsurpassed in the story of our spiritual evolution. His death denotes, not the cutting off of the root of mortality, but even the striking deep of the root of immortality in the very grave into which he was hurried by ruthless fanatics and political alarmists. He discoursed on matters that his contemporaries could not understand. The faith which dwelt in him, the vision which shone before him, the message which emanated from him, were meant for the ages yet to come. The future was to be the harvest-field of his spirit.

Life is, after all, wisely and beneficently ordered, from start to finish. Only we should wait till the end, if we would judge aright. The lordly tree is of age-long growth; the prophet's gourd thrives and dies in a single night. Learn, therefore, this great lesson—not to judge of fulness and fruition by the brief span of an individual's mortal life but by the ever-increasing purpose disclosed through the unfolding ages. It is only creatures of little moral worth—the moth and the worm—that are produced in the speediest way and in countless numbers to live their hour and pass away. If life is made perfect through sacrifice and that, too, laboriously and over long stretches of endeavour and experience, it is for a reason similar

to that for which we have to adjust the eye and admit the light, ray by ray, as the sun first dawns on the slumbering life in the half-closed chamber.

It is the apparent insignificance of life, the seeming aimlessness of life, that constitutes the tragedy of tragedies. And it is for this ancient enigma, this persistent puzzle—namely, that good appears to come to grief, while evil seems to triumph—that wisdom has to find a solution. What is the end of life? Happiness—is that the answer? What is the end of life? Possessions and power—is that the answer? What is the end of life? Knowledge, insight, penetration, faith, trust, wisdom, resolution, labour—is that the answer? Which of these is the right answer? As the old man bowed down with the weight of years, when asked why he was engaged in that absurd task of planting a little sapling at his age, replied that he followed those who had gone before him and had planted trees the fruit of which he reaped; so, wise men and true do not always plant for themselves. Our realisation, our redemption, lies not in what we may reap ourselves but in what others may reap of our labours. If I ask you, my dear ones, this simple question, namely, which of the two will be

honourable—to die a creditor or a debtor, every manly soul amongst you will promptly answer, ‘Of course, a creditor.’ Then, the supreme lesson for us is: so to live as to gift, with something sound and wholesome, those who come after us, instead of our carrying away more than our due portion. The oldest of our scriptures, the *Rig-Veda*, inculcates this same truth of self-sacrifice as exemplified by the *Parama Purusha* Himself in the very act of cosmic creation. The cradle of the universe is rocked by self-sacrifice. This is the significance also of the Cross. In Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress*, there is a character named Faithful. He is executed on a cross. Symbolically Bunyan places, at the foot of that cross, a cradle with a new-born babe in it¹ whose name is, not Faithful, but Hopeful. On the cross the Faithful give up the life; at its foot the Hopeful come into life. The cross of the lofty-souled is the fountain-spring, the vital strength, of the humble-spirited in that it vindicates, by means of an impressive example, the justice of the basic principle of our life, even that of life made perfect through sacrifice, through ready suffering for others’ happiness. This is that blessedness, as distinguished from, and exalted above, mere happiness, which Carlyle pronounces to be the end and aim of our life. Here we may recall that very

suggestive legend that, as the ocean was churned, one of the objects that came up was the *halahalam*. The poison had to be drunk by some one. And he who drank it could proclaim, '*Sivam, Sivam*'. Evermore, he alone who drinks up the *halahalam* of human sorrows and sufferings can pronounce the benediction—*Sivam*, Peace. He alone can say, 'I have swallowed the poison, that you may have peace and happiness; I have given up my life, that you may come to full, free life.' Siva achieves *sivam* because he is 'Hara', the Destroyer of all-consuming selfishness. He alone can say, 'Peace, Peace'. Thus Sacrifice is the 'earnest' of Salvation.

VIII

A DECADE AT THE COLLEGE.

THE SCHOOL-MASTER :

HIS AVOCATION AND HIS AMENITIES.

(1915)

By this time I expect you know why you have been asked to meet here. Why I said yesterday that I sincerely hoped to meet you this day, was to tell you that with this day ten years of my connection with the College are completed. And ten years, you know, certainly constitute not a very short period in the brief life-time of a humble individual.

Now, I may begin by observing that I might have been here for the last twenty years ; but that could not be. It was first proposed to get me here as early as March 1894. Efforts were made in that behalf, but they were resisted by counter-efforts ; and the counter-efforts prevailed. For a full decade I had to remain out. Then, towards the

* A short talk to the Senior Students on the completion of ten years' service (1—2—15).

book called the 'Imperial Fortune-teller'. When a boy, I was one day playing with that book along with four others. An answer was sought from that oracle to the query, what profession I should follow. The answer was that I would be a school-master. The 'Imperial Fortune-teller' has been somehow right. The school-master's profession, you know, may not be much honoured; but it is thoroughly honest. It is not 'honourable' in this strange sense: in a certain village, there were the village munsiff and the karnam holding their *levee* in the village court one night. They saw a person nearing the place, accompanied by a servant who carried a lantern for him. They took him to be a Revenue Inspector or some other grand Government official, and they stood up in respect. But on nearer approach, they found him to be only a school-master—a Professor in a College, and said, 'Ah, that is only a school-master, after all!', and they sat down! Certainly, he did not merit the courtesy of their standing-up on his approach. Nevertheless, the profession is honourable in another sense. Dr. Busby, the Head Master of a famous English School, used to observe that the Lord-Chancellors of England for a number of years had passed under his cane; meaning thereby that many a youth whom he had flogged

rose afterwards to eminence. And when King Charles II visited his School, Dr. Busby said, "Your Majesty will be pleased to excuse me for not taking off my hat. I wish to prove to my boys that within the precincts of the School I do not yield precedence even to a Monarch." And he was not wrong. Did I not tell you of my passage-at-arms once with a father? A certain boy was in the habit of running away during the Drawing periods. I noted him on a certain day; and on the next day I told him to stand up on the bench. 'No, sir.' 'All right, sir; then, take half-dozen cuts.' 'Ah, no, sir; I will rather leave the school and go away.' 'You may leave, by all means; but only receive this farewell token before you go'; and he had to take it. His father had for sometime been a Sub-Magistrate here. He wrote to me the following day to say, 'Sir, will you, please, oblige me by lending a copy of the Educational Rules?' I sent him a copy. He next came to me and said, 'What, sir? He is a mere boy, and you gave him too severe a punishment!' 'You may think so.' 'It is very unkind of you, sir, to have thrashed him like that.' 'It is very unkind of you, sir, to speak to me like that in the presence of your boy. He may, as he has proposed, leave the school.' That settled the business for the

law-enforcing Sub-Magistrate, who went away with the notion that he had done a favour to his son. But before long the son ran away from his books altogether. Which of the two did real disservice to the boy—the father or the teacher? Says a Persian adage—*jour-e-ustad beh az mehr-e-pidar*: the vigour of the teacher is preferable to the lenience of the father. The teacher has to be stern and circumspect at his post.

I greatly desire that as many as possible of my students should become teachers. Teachers, indeed, are more born than made. They justify themselves more by natural aptitude than by acquired capacity, though there ought to exist a great deal of acquired capacity as well. I heartily wish that a good number of you should become teachers—such of you as feel they possess that type of capacity and character; not merely the hum-drum, passable type, but the really noteworthy type. Let them become teachers, not by chance, not by necessity, not for bread-earning, but by choice, by personal option and election. It matters not much whether you grow rich or remain poor. A multi-millionaire remarked, on a certain occasion, that to die rich is to die disgraced. Nobody in this world has any business to die rich. Therefore,

you should not worry much about riches in metal. But the wealth of love is evermore to be coveted ; and nowhere can it be more abundantly gathered than in the teacher's life. You may not light upon a mine of gold and silver ; but you can count upon untold stores of love and tenderness. They can never be exhausted in this noble, this sacred profession. So, you must be prepared to do anything, to suffer anything, for the sake of this avocation in life. There will be many a trouble in your way, no doubt. That is a fact, I tell you, a veritable fact ; there is not the slightest doubt about it. One of the best maxims for the teacher's life is, ' Never, even once, ask for promotion.' Ever since I accepted the profession, I have always enquired, ' What work are they going to give ? ' I never asked for more pay. There was an occasion at Secunderabad when, on its being observed of me by the Inspector that I had been drawing the same pay for some years, the Secretary of the Managing Committee said, ' Shall I recommend you for increment ? ' I said, ' Please don't put me that question.' He pressed me twice over ; I gave the same reply. ' What do you mean ? ', he asked. I said, ' I never ask for more pay. If they thought I deserved it, the authorities would look to it.' And there the subject dropped. It is a pity that several

or us teachers fail, at times, to view the matter that way. Now, I want you to try and bear it clearly in mind that, as a teacher, one is liable to be put to a good deal of inconvenience. It is not a paying profession. But Carlyle has reported of a certain German scholar, most learned and notable, that he lived on pulses and warm water! The renowned founder of one of the Six Systems of Hindu Philosophy, Kanada, would seem to have been so named, because he used to dry up roots or bulbs, roast them and take them for food. He has left behind a very learned commentary in Sanskrit. Yet if you render yourself efficient, you are bound, sooner or later, to obtain recognition to a considerable extent. This profession brings such splendid facilities for life being made rich and valuable by the receiving and giving of affection and instruction.

Well, all this is a bye-talk. You wish me to tell you, how long I will continue here. I do not know. Not very long; but as long as 'Destiny' intends. That is my wish. 'There's a divinity that shapes our ends.' Now, all happiness be with you! God bless us, one and all! And now, to business—a 'social.'

IX

WOMAN IN THE BRAHMA SAMAJ

(1930)

Most remarkable and inspiring has been the work of the Brahma Samaj in regard to the improvement of the position of woman, as it has been with other social problems. On this particular subject of what the Brahma Samaj has done on behalf of women, it will make a long list even to name the very distinguished women it has produced. It may not be out of place to observe that just as in Bengal the Brahma Samaj has been the nursery of several noble women, as has been set forth in the paper which we have heard with profit and pleasure, in the like manner the Samaj has been actively promotive of the welfare of women in other provinces as well. Further, while assessing the services of the Brahma Samaj in producing outstanding personalities, we should take note of the fact that not a few appearing

* Closing remarks after an address on the subject by Mrs. B. B. Rakshit, B.A., B.T., at Brahmopasana Mandir, Cocanada, during Ram Mohan's Brahma Mandir and Trust-Deed Centenary Celebrations (25-1-30).

latterly under other categories were cradled in the Brahma Samaj. One name now known and esteemed all the world over is that of Sreemati Sarojini Devi, fostered and brought up by Brahma parents, though, perhaps, not quite prepared now to be noted as a Brahmica in the census returns. Among those directly connected with the Brahma Samaj, close to us here, in our own part of the country, is the inspiring example of Sreemati K. Rajyalakshamma Garu, the cherished partner in life of our ever-honoured leader, Sree Veeresalingam Pantulu Garu. It is absolutely true that she was, with him, the joint-parent of the marvellous uplift work carried out in Andhradesa. He has borne his own personal testimony that she was his invigorating help-meet in all the good results he could achieve. In the Bombay Presidency, the pioneers of woman's advancement all came from the Prarthana Samaj. The children of one patriarch, Dr. Atmaram Pandurang, have been prominent for the advanced position they attained in social and domestic life. There is also the revered name of Sreemati Ramabai Ranade, renowned for her devoted labours. In the work for the elevation of the 'depressed classes,' the inspiration has been sustained and intensified by members of the fair sex in the Samaj.

Before concluding, I will allude to one noble trait in the character of Rajah Ram Mohan Roy. At no gathering, private or public, large or small, where he was present would he ever take a seat while a lady was standing. Was he not thus proved a prince among men? A certain lady friend of his in England remarked, 'Were I the Queen of England, I should not have been treated with higher respect'. In the Brahma Samaj, we fully share in the sublime sentiment of the blessed Prophet, Mahammad. When the Master was asked which was the greater of the two parents of a man, he emphatically declared it was the mother, because (he added) at her feet lay heaven itself. One of the characteristic features of the Brahma Samaj movement is the reverential attitude towards the mother. The mother, in the Brahma Samaj, has been, not merely the fostering, but also the inspiring, parent. This inspiration imbibed from the mother has made itself felt all over the country. Well may we render thanks to God that unto this numerically small community it has been granted to make to the sacred cause of the exaltation of women a contribution far out of proportion to its strength.

There are several young men here present. Unto them the final appeal of the evening may

aptly be made : would you mould in yourselves a pure, strong, genial and beneficent character, then, learn to revere the sex of the mother : for, then alone man will attain to the seat of strength and the shrine of bliss. Says a fine Sanskrit maxim, ‘Blessed is the son that sees a mother’s face wherever he turns.’ Is not this *matrubhavam*—this filial reverence for woman—noted as a primal element, as essential factor, in the spiritual constitution of that paragon of *bhaktas*—Prahlada ? It is this purifying look and commanding outlook that constitutes the fountain-source, not only of gallant chivalry, but of sanctified humanity. Aye, bow at the feet of the mother ; and you bow before incarnate divinity. As Sister Nivedita has wisely observed, Hamlet rebuking his guilty mother may be possible in the West but is simply impossible in the East. The mother is always the mother. He who scrutinises and estimates her character is, in matters of the spirit, as sordid as the low-souled naturalist who visited his mother’s grave and started botanising there. The mother’s arms are verily the golden cradle in which is nurtured whatever is bright and beautiful, high-souled and heavenly, among the children of men. That is the ideal attitude of the Brahma Samaj in regard to woman. True to our national character and to our church ideal, let us

learn to honour and to revere the sex of our mothers.

In these days when the authority of religion is cited on all sides for perpetuating many an ancient wrong inflicted on woman, let the voice of the Brahma Samaj ring out clear that, not merely from physical disabilities, not solely from mental depression, but also and specially from spiritual depreciation, it is an imperative duty of a true Brahmo to relieve or redeem every woman with whom he has fraternal affinities. For, in the heart of a true woman is reared the purest temple of God. Is it not a very true and apt expression which styles the wife the better half? It is the expression of respect and devotion. Let every Brahmo keep fresh in his mind and hold dear to his heart this lofty ideal of woman—the mother, the sister, the wife and the daughter.

X

BIRTH-DAY ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.

(1925)

SISTERS AND BROTHERS,

That world-renowned sage and teacher, Emerson, has observed that to a feeling mother every moment in the life of her child is a miracle of God disclosed to her own anxious yet trustful heart. If only we imbibed and cultivated something of the mother, that is, of that tenderness which is momentarily solicitous for the welfare of the dear offspring, we should realise, too, how every instant in our individual life is an impressive miracle of the grace of God. If only we viewed it in the right spirit and with correct judgment, it would be recognised as a literal fact that every beat of the heart is truly and really one fresh expression of the direct interest of God in one's life. I have not the slightest doubt about it, namely, that God is thus manifesting and realising Himself in the life of each one of us with every beat of the heart and every throb of the

* On the occasion of the 63rd Birth-day Celebrations at Pithapuram Palace (26-9-25).

pulse. Consequently, how great, how deep, how intense, how profound must be the sense of one's gratitude, as one feels that God, in His mercy, has manifested Himself, not in one beat or two beats of the heart, but during three score and three years ! Really, my sisters and brothers, the heart beats faster than usual, and the tongue falters in speech, as I recall the fact that with a wakefulness that knows no fatigue, with a personal interest that suffers no slackness and with a direct touch that experiences no uneasiness, God has been placing His own spirit in intimate contact even with this humblest and obscurest of His creatures. Who can measure the height, who can sound the depth, who can gauge the range, of His love ? As the thought of this limitless love of His comes upon us, we feel how words are simply idle in the sense, not of being merely useless, but of being utterly, helplessly, absolutely inadequate to the purpose. Therefore, you will, with your discerning spirit, realise, in a measure not possible for me to state in words, how profoundly grateful I feel on this occasion, when you join with me in rendering thankful praise to Him who has, all these years, thus kept watch and ward, with every beat of the heart, even over this most abject one amongst His creatures. There is no gift like the gift of conjoint

flow on after centuries ; and in the light of these recurring phenomena, what is the 'keeping of a birth-day' but only halting and pausing on the way to mark, with reverent reflection, the ceaseless, watchful care of the Eternal encompassing us behind and before, above and around ? That thus, by singling it out, we might be trained and enabled the more clearly to perceive the mercies of God, ought we to 'keep', with due solemnity, the day of advent into the world, aye, even the day of exit from the world. For, as Sadi has said, as thou camest, thou didst weep while all around laughed to welcome thee ; as thou departest, mayst thou laugh as all around weep to lose thee ! Hence, these are days significant only as so many milestones and landmarks in the holy pilgrimage of eternal life. As we march on, we leave some behind ; and that they call death, while for us, in truth, it is but going ahead. And, birth or death, both are of God's ordaining. As we rejoice over the one, may we not be prepared also to receive the other as but the signal that, after all, He is going to resume into Himself what has emanated forth from Himself ? The Lord of mercies is always the Lord of mercies ; and howsoever varied the forms His mercies wear, He is yet the Lord of

mercies. Shine or shower, the Eternal Sun, the *Akshayakirana*, is there on high with quenchless rays, infusing life and light and love into all here below. Be this our abiding spirit of faith unshaken and trust unclouded now and in the time to come!

Once again, I heartily thank you all for having come here on this occasion to express your hearts' satisfaction and joy that even unto this humble creature has been vouchsafed the mercy of God in this manner and in this measure.

Thou art the Mother of all—not merely the Mother that begetteth but the Mother that spendeth Herself for the child and yet remaineth unexhausted in the infinity of Her love. Thou art the Mother. As we think of Thee as the Mother, we feel the holiness of our being as the offspring of the Holy Mother. As we greet Thee as the Mother, we feel assured that from the bosom of the Mother nothing can issue that is not tender and loving. And as we adore Thee as the Mother, we feel cradled in the very lap of love and holiness, there to be perfected by Thee and in Thee. Thou Mother of all love and all holiness, Thou the Divine Mother of all, we praise and glorify and worship Thee.

And what is a birth-day, if not truly a day of birth again out of Thee and in Thee and into Thee? The human mother's function, after all, centres round but a single event. But Thine office as the Divine Mother—even that of momentarily renewing the life — knows no termination and oversteps all limitation. Not to be born with each birth-day, nay, with each succeeding day, into Thy bosom of purity and righteousness, of love and tenderness—is it not to prove the prodigal against the Divine Mother? And yet, oh yet, is not this very prodigal dearest unto Thy Mother-heart and preordained, ere he strays, to be restored to Thy bosom and, ere he wastes himself, to be replenished in the bounty of Thy spirit? Thou art our Mother, the Mother of each one of us. And individually and unitedly we all bow down before Thee and render whole-hearted obeisances unto Thee. Bless us all, we beseech Thee, with the blessing of appraising ourselves truly, consciously and happily, the darling children of the Divine Mother. Bless these, my sisters and brothers; I humbly prostrate myself and supplicate Thy grace for each one of them. Let not the sinful heart that prays tarnish the sincerity or impair the strength of the prayer; but in the

fulness of Thy Mother-love, do Thou cherish them, one and all, and make that love prevail more and more to direct them wisely and willingly to claim Thee as their own, their one Mother of mothers. Even unto this fragile creature, this abject sinner, Thou hast been the Divine Mother, with the sixty-three years left behind bearing witness to constant care, ceaseless watchfulness, inexhaustible kindness and interminable love. With the profoundest thankfulness and reverence I bless Thee, Mother. Blessed, blessed, blessed be Thy name now and for ever !

Om ! Harih Om !

XI

A CHARGE TO OUT-GOING STUDENTS.

(1915)

It has become the practice, a kind of unwritten law, for the Principal to wind up the happy programme of the evening with a few words of affectionate farewell to those who, as a Class, have completed their education here and are about to enter upon higher studies or practical life. On an occasion like this, while the students, naturally and commendably, address themselves to dwelling gratefully upon the benefits and acknowledging feelingly the blessings which they believe they have received here, somehow, as if to counterbalance those sentiments and steady the mind, the thoughts of the teachers revolve round the pathetic failures that attend their own attempts. While you feel upborne by thankfulness for all that has been done, we feel depressed with sadness that, after all, so little has been done. Resolutions unsteadily carried out, endeavours feebly executed, progress imperfectly achieved, results scantily realised, we feel

* At the Juniors' Annual Send-off to the Seniors in P. R. College, Cocanada (25-2-15).

that the years granted to us to shape your lives have been beset with hindrances and obstructions due mostly to our own shortcomings. The pious promises of the night falsified on the day following, the devout prayers of the morning vanishing unrealised at the approach of the evening, the previous preparation falling far short of the expected results, the outlook often bewildering as an extensive field seems to be opening out, and further study and investigation only confronting us with the puzzling, baffling problem of how to make the budding mind receive the wholesome influences of well-reasoned thought and dear-cherished ideals - all these crowd in upon the mind at a solemn moment like this. While you may, with the generosity characteristic of healthy youth, acknowledge that pains have not been spared, opportunities have not been wasted, in profiting you, we are weighed down by the oppressive consciousness of our deplorable deficiencies or sad failures. Perhaps, it is so ordained in the fitness of things. While hope is emboldened to imagine so much, experience is condemned to sigh for so much. Therein lies the impetus to higher endeavours as well as the caution for that moderation without which eagerness would burst into

fanaticism. Whereas we are thankful, grateful, for your cordial appreciation of our feeble attempts to be of some service to you, it will perhaps help you rightly to realise your hopes to yourselves, if you feel how we are thus painfully conscious of our own shortcomings. We have done very little; therefore, do not expect a big harvest as the natural reward of this. What are we, after all, but humble toilers, lowly tillers? The rain that descendeth and refresheth, the soil that dissolveth itself into sap and sweetness, the air that braceth and vivifieth, the light that cheereth and expandeth—all are gifts from Him whose will alone ever prevails and whose mercy alone ever avails. Unto us it is only given to pray and to try. In Him is vested the power to bless and to realise. Therefore, we repeat words that embody the soul's most affectionate expression of prayerful farewell and say: He the Supreme Wielder of destinies, may He so shape your lives that you may prove an ample source of joy to your parents, of satisfaction to your community and of benefit to humanity at large! That, after all, is the essence of our good wishes and prayers on this occasion.

Before I proceed further, will you allow me, at this point, just a word about the way you have

received one of the preceding speeches, that of your own fellow-student, Kamaraju? Though it raised peals of laughter, what he said contained a good deal of sound sense. The spirit of what he said, therefore, must be well borne in mind. And what of the laughter itself, by the way? I felt that my friend, your Science Lecturer, had unconsciously sent into the Hall an extra quantity of the nitrogenous product known as the 'laughing gas'. In fact, that kind of laughter at a time like this and in such obtrusive evidence reminds me of the cynical comparison between timely and untimely laughter, as given by a Persian poet. Seasonable laughter, he observes, is like the appearance of the ruby seeds through a ripe pomegranate; but unseasonable laughter—what is it like? It is like the snapped seams of an old shoe! To laugh is the privilege of man alone, provided it is rightly used. Therefore, one little lesson which I have from time to time tried to impress upon youthful minds is this—namely, learn to laugh with good sense and grace. Perhaps, I am touching a tickling chord; but I feel sure that an unsavoury piece of advice like this, especially on the present occasion, will smoothly go down, helped by the refreshments that are soon to follow.

To turn now to the spirit of the utterance above refered to. We are like other institutions in the general features of our College. At the same time, we have certain distinguishing characteristics which ought to make an abiding impression upon your thoughts and lives. Firstly, we have, again and again, tried to lay due emphasis on the fact that the tap-root of a youth's life is purity. We have invited solemn yet tender attention to the loving relationship that exists between those that have derived their common descent from the father that guides in righteousness and the mother that loves in purity. It has been said that righteousness is the father and love the mother of the human soul. Unless he has righteousness, the father is only a drill-ground; unless she has love, the mother is only a store-room. It is love that makes her a spring of the sublimest inspiration, even as it is righteousness that makes him an exemplar of the most heroic resolution. Consequently, we, in our humble way, have, time and again, invited your prominent attention to the fact that unless you learn to realise the God-ordained relationship between the two sexes as born in righteousness and love, you not only miss a fund of happiness but fail to reach some of the richest sources of enlightenment, goodness and vigour.

A second feature of this Institution, intimately connected with the first, is the fact that we have a few girl-pupils. I do not know if I may generalise from my own personal experience. But since one's own experience is inevitably the basis of one's utterance, I can say that the greatest blessing of a young man is a young, devotedly-attached, tenderly-cherished *sister*. The mother you may reverence; the father you may honour; the brother you may play with; but it is the sister that calls forth the native chivalry God has implanted in you. I count it, therefore, a privilege of this year's Junior Inter students that unto them has been vouchsafed the especial boon of a sister-student. To call one 'sister' because physical nature has so fixed it, may be a necessity which we may not exalt into a duty and a joy. But to recognise and esteem as a sister one who draws close through mind-kinship and soul-fraternity, is to grow out of the narrowness of self into the largeness of service. Hence, I believe it is a very encouraging feature of the Institution that we have a few of these girl-pupils amongst us. An English visitor to America, surprised at the fact that there were not a few girl-pupils in almost every one of her Colleges, asked an American Professor, 'Can

you trust your boys like that?' And the spontaneous reply was, 'We do not depend on our boys. Our anchor of safety is our trust in our girls.' This trust in the sex of our mothers and sisters serves as a stronger sword and a sounder armour for our life than any other social ideal we can cherish. To say, as many a good and great man has said, 'That sister, that mother, that wife or that daughter has been my inspiration', is to attach oneself with golden cords of uplifting influence to all that is ennobling and sanctifying in the world's inner history. Hence the gratification that you are entering the threshold of such a life of inspired self-dedication.

Thirdly, we are honestly trying, both inside and outside the Institution, to help and foster those who, for generations together and for no fault of theirs but through the accumulated neglect of the community at large, have been led to feel that they are merely the outer helots who can never aspire to enter into the light that shines upon the favoured citizens. The Rev. Dr. Murray Mitchell observed that, when he came to Poona about 1835, he was amazed to find a civic rule to the effect that, within the Municipal limits of that orthodox City, no member of the 'depressed classes' could,

at stated hours in the morning and in the evening, venture into the precincts thereof, because the human shadow cast at that time would be so long and stretch over so large a part of the whole road that the sanctified persons of the higher castes who passed along the way would be polluted. Thus, along the road of life we have posted warning-boards for them not to pass across our way, lest the discredited shadow should draw near and besmirch us! Now the time is come for a new order of things, thanks to that universal inspiration which is passing through all hearts—the inspiration which proves that the total strength of the chain depends on the weakest link in it; and, therefore, it behoves us not to be hammering at the strongest but to be reforging and reinforcing the weakest link. We are awakened to a sense of duty with the strongest stimulus to action, even because it is related to self-interest. Rightly viewed, it is not the ‘depressed’ man before us that is held down but the aspiring man in us that is kept down with the depression of a brother-man. Feeling thus, let us prove to them how endeared they are to us, make it manifest to them that they are the very blood of our blood and the very flesh of our flesh, and they constitute a dear and anxious concern

of our lives, and we will do all we can for their uplift, even because our own welfare is involved in theirs.

These three features, then, are, at the present moment, found in our Institution to a degree appreciably greater than elsewhere. Therefore, my dear pupils, as you leave your *alma mater*, imprint these, her prominent features, on your minds as the expression of truly lofty principles. Unless you are pure within, everything without will seem impure; even because we see only that which we train our eyes to see. Unless you cherish those who are the embodiments of tenderness and purity sweetened and sublimated into love—tender because prompted by purity, pure because promotive of tenderness, you will miss the inspiration that springs from their honoured sex. Realise that the sternness of man is perfected in the tenderness of woman; cease to be machines of feelingless steel and become souls of feelingful sympathy. And even as we exalt ourselves by humility, even as the bending bough is the richest-laden with fruit, take up the cause of those who, through commonplace, customary notions, are called ‘depressed’; and thus realise the strength and virtue of your sense of duty and honour. In

one of his beautiful songs, Rabindranath Tagore says : The usual measure applied for understanding the greatness of God is, 'How soaring, how sublime He is !' ; but a truer measure, one that helps to disclose the full proportions, of His greatness, is, not the height to which He soars, but the depth to which He deigns. The goodness that comes down to, and protects, the humble, the lowly and the fallen, is of the sublimest. And adds Rabindranath : I can understand the greatness which goes up ; but I am not yet able to realise that greatness which dives deep and plunges into the abysses of humble worth which man passes by or brushes aside. Not in blessing the lofty but in sanctifying, by sheltering and redeeming, the lowly lies the fulness of divine greatness. Therefore, dear boys, carry with you the noble principles themselves and not merely the concrete facts alone ; for, these latter are of value only as the expression of some truly great principles. Nestle them in your hearts. Be sweet, be tender, be disinterested ; above all, be loving. 'The greatest thing in the world' is Love ; the noblest quality is Love ; the only saving grace is Love ; the only adorable virtue is Love. And Love weaves itself into so many—why, into all the—concerns and occupations of life.

Some of you are old enough to know the perplexities of human experience and are alive to the struggles of human existence. But yet you are refreshed and reassured with the hope and the trust that you are safe in the hands of Him who is the Supreme Wielder of all destinies. That is a very enviable possession. But oh, for my part, how often, on what countless occasions, have I failed to realise that these, too, are young men with their own perplexities and with their own burden of struggles and responsibilities! How often have I treated them as little, irresponsible lads who have no business to think of cares and anxieties, and thus lost the opportunities of proving useful to them with the sympathy of a fellow-human being! This is the lesson I have learnt to-day—to be more care-taking and thought-bestowing, not forgetful of the fact that young men, too, have to face the oppressive experiences of the stern, aye, relentless, realities of life. Therefore, though it might look as if I am inverting the natural order in the fitness of things, I do not hesitate to say, ‘Dear, dear boys, as you go away, do overlook and excuse the grave omissions which have unconsciously but painfully been committed by me and, perhaps, by others among my colleagues.’ We live in a world of limitations. We have to work

under cramping conditions. And owing to necessity or to the apathy of custom, we are blind, impervious, insensitive to certain phases of human nature. Again and again I must have made your unsophisticated hearts feel that, after all, there is so little here of true hospitality born of humanity—of insight and sympathy. I hope, by God's grace, to understand things better in that direction.

I would ask you, in closing, to bear in mind one sentence from the memorable utterance, eleven years ago at Madras, when addressing a large concourse of students, of him whose premature death we, as a nation, deeply mourn to-day—the late Hon'ble Mr. Gokhale. In 1904, when he visited Madras to lay the foundation-stone of the Ranade Library, a vast number of students welcomed him with an 'address,' in acknowledging which he said to them, 'Try to be gentlemen.' There is a world of meaning in that word, 'gentleman'. It implies all the noble qualities of high-mindedness. The reverent spirit of forgiveness, the generous disposition to help others, the steady leading of pure and good lives—all these are implied in that grand, ancient but ever-refreshing word, 'gentleman'. All that is stern in morality, all that is tender in humanity, all that is genuine in the sense of honour,

all that is invigorating in the sentiment of duty, all that is uplifting in the sublime virtue of purity—all are comprised in the word, ‘gentleman.’ Try to be gentlemen—men of honoured descent, of exalted parentage, of noble lineage, *in the spirit*. Be gentlemen noted for true gentleness which forgives what it can resent, is conciliatory when it can command, is humble when it can be towering, is yielding where it can enforce, and, above all, is serviceable where it can be indifferent or assertive. Be gentlemen in your judgments, imputing no motives but are honourable, applying no standards but of the strictest fairness, appraising passing incidents, however stirring, in the far-sighted spirit which believes in the influence and operation of the eternal forces of wisdom and goodness through all ages. Be gentlemen in your utterances, making your words the mirror of your thoughts, even as your thoughts must be the index to your ideals—those great ‘reverences’ into which your lives are, step by step, advancing. Thus live in yourselves the noble precept of ever-venerated Gokhale.

I have detained you longer than I intended to do; but I hope you will tolerate the intrusion in view of the occasion. I do venture once again to

ask you to carry with you all the dear and sweet associations, all the suggestive and edifying influences, which might have been brought to bear upon you, which might have been disclosed to you, during your stay here. It is beyond doubt or cavil that we have lived in intimate relationship for two full years and entered into a union on which undying love has set its attesting seal. Its pregnant possibilities can grow out in full only as life expands into the great Hereafter. You, students, and we, teachers, are not parties to a short-lived contract that you pay the fee and we impart the instruction and we both let the University measure out the results. No ; we have, beyond the scope of money and office and function, been living together here in the closest and sweetest of relationships—in companionship of spirit, in communion of ideals. And so long as spirit endures and ideals abide, may our relationship last ! We part to meet again : we part in the relationship of the instructed and the instructors in the limited sense ; but we shall remain united even as co-pilgrims along the path of duty and truthfulness, love and righteousness.

XII

MY DEBT TO THE BRAHMA SAMAJ AND ITS CONDITION IN ANDHRA.

(1926)

VENERATED PRESIDENT AND HONOURED SISTERS
AND BROTHERS,

Pray, pardon me if, in my brief word of acknowledgment, I venture to say, though probably it will not be quite approved of your own feelings, that I am profoundly thankful for the exceedingly generous sentiments expressed towards me, the more so because they are due wholly to the goodness of your hearts with little or no merit in me. Love sees with the eye of love. It espies superb beauty even in a stale and commonplace figure. Hence, as you have turned upon me the eye of loving-kindness, it is but inevitable that you should find an uncommon measure of merit where, indeed, little or none of it actually exists. As for the personal obligations voiced by our revered Presi-

* Response to Reception at the Mandir of the Sadharan Brahma Samaj, with its President, Pandit Sitanath Tathvabhushan, in the chair (18-2-'26).

dent, I am sure you will understand me aright when I say that, even according to him whom he is pleased so feelingly to refer to as his great benefactor, the Maharajah Saheb of Pithapuram, the balance of merit lies no more on the side of the 'benefactor' than on that of the self-designated beneficiary. To have made provision for the subsistence of one who has lived every day, aye, every hour, of his life as under the Great Task-master's eye—therein is, indeed, evidence of the wise judgment of the Maharajah Saheb; but it argues only the native, God-granted gift of first discerning the existence of uncommon worth and of then sustaining its usefulness by befitting encouragement. From what I personally know of the good Maharajah Saheb's sentiments in regard to such acts, he will be disposed only to feel gratified, and even thankful, that he has been elected to be the vehicle of the bounty of God to His ever-diligent servant. As for my humble self, I can assure you that absolutely nothing should have been possible for me, even by way of suggestion to further this expression of bounty, but for the pre-existence of two great factors—the sterling value of him to whom this appreciation has been conveyed and the tender, prayerful nature of him who takes

pleasure in conveying that token of appreciation. If both these conditions had not already existed by the grace of God, what could possibly have been done by this humble creature? No credit, not even an iota of it, is mine. Rather, mine is the privilege of functioning, so to speak, as the link of inter-relation between two such admirable spirits akin in their common devotion to the same good cause under the same gracious God. I feel as if blessed that I was required to constitute such a happy link. If I am credited with, and praised for, any other services I am supposed to have rendered, I ask myself what I could possibly do that might make even the least, the remotest, approximation to the semblance of a return for all that the Brahma Samaj has so munificently done for me. It is the barest truth that even unto me, unto this frail, erring, sin-tainted spirit, the Brahma Samaj has brought the greatest blessing of man—even faith in the Supreme One as my own God, my All-in-all.

It may interest you if I refer back to the earliest occurrences when I felt drawn towards the truth of that pure, spiritual Monotheism which is the distinguishing ideal and message of the Brahma Samaj. My good father having been an officer in

the Indian Army, I was, even as a small boy, taken away far beyond the limits of my own Telugu country. And according to the prescribed course, I had, to the comparative neglect of my mother-tongue, to be put to a study of Persian and Urdu. As is well-known to those acquainted with the literatures of the two languages, every book in them opens with the solemn invocation—‘In the name of the One God, the Compassionate and the Merciful.’ Before long, I could also glean the inspiring ideas of the opening verse of the Koran. This new thought evoked in me an insistent reflection as to its deep significance. What did it mean? What did it imply? What did it demand? And by slow, imperceptible degrees, I felt effectively withdrawn from the traditional belief and worship of the home and directed towards the only possible alternative of the contemplation and adoration of the One Supreme God. It was then a school-boy’s faith, now taking one form and now another, as the soul, yet groping and feeling, was not able clearly to distinguish between opposing creeds. All the while, however, its predominant note, its pivotal point, was the One God, the Compassionate and the Merciful. At that time, as I was reading in one of the middle classes of the School at Banda, we had to go through a certain Manual of Indian

History by Lethbridge, a Professor in Bengal. The book had thus come to us from Calcutta. Our lesson for the day comprised the Administration of Lord William Bentinck. One of the events therein mentioned was that Ram Mohan Roy had died at Bristol in 1833. My teacher was a Bengalee gentleman, Babu Gangadhara Mukherjee. I asked him why that event should have been specially chronicled in the book and who the person named was. Knowing of the Brahma Samaj only from a distance, himself not a Brahmo, he told me that Ram Mohan Roy had established a church which prevented people from becoming Christians and had introduced a system of spiritual worship free from association with idolatry; but it was not Christianity, for there was in it no belief in the divinity of Christ. My class-mate, Poorna Chandra Banerjee, was the son of my revered Head Master, Babu Dinanath Banerjee, a Christian. And Poorna Chandra and I would, in our own juvenile fashion, carry on discussions over our personal faiths. We agreed that worship should be spiritual; but I would maintain that Christ was no deity. Now, after hearing, in that casual manner, about Ram Mohan and his teaching, I remarked, 'Poorna Chendra, that is my religion.' My enquiry next

turned upon whether at the time there lived any prominent leader of the Movement of Ram Mohan. 'Yes; a great and eloquent leader, known as Keshub.' 'Did he not enter into controversy with men of other persuasions?' 'He has carried on debates with eminent Christian missionaries.' 'And with what result?' To this last question, I would have my own pre-assured answer. 'What! One who held by the Supreme God and worshipped Him alone—for him to be foiled in controversy by a Christian!' 'That was my boyish assurance. And, somehow, it still continues, in its essence, to be the vital principle of my conviction. Nobody can shake the soul-deep foundations of the Theistic Faith, pure and simple. People argue ever so much about artificial forms and the practical necessity of an embodied personality for revelation and of some concrete representation for worship. But I always feel that somehow I am lifted above the need for it all; and consequently, it is not the negation of idols and incarnations that matters but the enunciation and realisation of the positive fact that the Supreme God is available unto all. There is no one grovelling in such unsounded depths of iniquity or shrouded in such unrelieved gloom of distress or

degradation, and no one perched on such soaring altitudes of philosophic reflection or empyrean heights of wisdom, as to lie beyond the reach of God. Therefore, as a corollary to this conviction, the Brahma Samaj has informed me that every being lay, by the very axiom of its existence, within the orbit of 'Grace Abounding' and that none can, therefore, be ejected from the domain of righteousness. Forms may be variant; expressions may be divergent; but kinship of spirit is ever fore-ordained for all as the perennial expression—the immortal offspring, of one Primeval Spirit. The Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man, though, for the convenience of current speech, assumed to be two separate enunciations, yet represent but one truth. And holding that truth as all-in-all in religion, how can I evaluate Brahmaism to myself except as God's richest gift; and how can I help thanking my God for that blessing of infinite mercy and grace brought to the very door of the sinner's heart? All I hold dear, I owe to Brahmaism. Then, all that is possible for this poor, humble individual to do on its behalf, is by supreme right the prerogative of the Brahma Samaj. That is all I can say. The present feeling, however, is, not the gratifying feeling of a debt discharged, but the oppressive feeling

of so much remaining unpaid. What can I do adequately to betoken my profound sense of indebtedness to the Brahma Samaj ?

Then, as to the condition of the Movement in my part of the country, I am afraid a stay-at-home like myself cannot profess to speak with anything like personal knowledge, especially in the presence of my dearly loved brother, Babu Hem Chandra Sircar, a constant missionary visitor all through that Presidency. Speaking, however, of Andhra-desa, I believe it may be observed that there is a wider spread of interest in the Brahma Samaj than elsewhere in Southern India, thanks to the devoted labours of some selfless souls, the foremost amongst them being my honoured leader, Veeresalingam Pautulu Garu of revered memory. Almost all our Samajes are comparatively small in size, and many of them pivoted on single individuals. But geographically they form a net-work, beginning from Ganjam District and stretching right down to Nellore. And spiritually, by God's grace, they have produced and nurtured a certain number of earnest and devout souls believing in, and deriving strength and comfort from, the message of the Brahma Samaj. One of these fine spirits, Sambasiva Rao, you yourselves have seen at close

quarters. Another was Bapayya, gathered early, as that other was, like a dear child of God, to the bosom of the Parent. Bapayya and Pantulu Garu were wide apart as regards age ; but they came together in the same vital current of glowing faith. Others, too, there have been, more or less equally dowered with the gifts of the Spirit. After all, the measure of success vouchsafed to the Brahma Samaj has to be gauged with reference to the devout spirits produced in it who enjoy the companionship of God ; and the fundamental object of the Samaj must be recognised as no other than the renovation of India through the spiritual regeneration of individual souls in the nation. Ours is essentially a religious body, while its self-expression and energy will and must ramify in various directions. A Judge of your High Court, with deep scholarship and broad sympathies, once declared that the original objective of Rajah Ram Mohan Roy was the political unification of India. But this is an inversion of the correct sequence of things—something of putting the cart before the horse. The Brahma Samaj stands primarily for religious reconstruction. In harmony with India's ancient message, its gospel is the gospel of the One Supreme God available unto one and all. ' Nations, behold your God ; rejoice, rejoice ! '—this is the

epitome of the evangel of Rajah Ram Mohan Roy, as formulated in a sonnet composed for his funeral in Bristol. For our own part, accordingly, we should be content to assess the success of the Brahma Samaj, primarily, with reference to the souls in whom the grace of God dwells and manifests itself. In the second place, it will interest you, our elder brothers, to know that we, in the Andhra districts, have been endeavouring to give some stability to the Movement by ensuring permanence to it in particular localities by means of *mandir* constructions. The Brahma Samaj, of course, places no trust in *mandirs* reared of human hands; the human soul alone is the real tabernacle of God. Yet, so long as body and soul are allied and the hallowed need lasts for what is termed *satsangatvam*, spiritual fellowship in the sacrament of united worship, the establishment of *mandirs* and their proper and systematic use for that prime object, is one index to the progress of the cause. Thus, the Telugu country is dotted over with Brahma *mandirs*, beginning with the northernmost Berhampore. The one at Cocanada, further down, is approaching completion on a really exquisite scale; associated as it is with the zeal and devotion of the Maharajah of Pithapuram (once again). The significance of this circumstance will be obvious to

you here, with your experience of how the erection of a *mandir* is a landmark of some prominence in the history of the Brahma Samaj. A third aspect is this. Perfectly true though it be to declare that, according to the gospel of the Brahma Samaj, every member, as he is a *mandir* of the Divine Spirit, is also an apostle of the Divine Truth, because of the duty laid on him to bear witness to the grace of the Lord, yet, with our human limitations and the consequent needs, we have to examine the situation by the test of the number and the influence of mission-workers devoted to the cause as the sole occupation of their lives. We have amongst us a set, a small band, of young men consecrated to the gospel work of the Brahma Samaj—young men, it may be, not of that high degree of culture which it has been the blessing of the Movement here in Calcutta to present, as voicing the message of the Brahma Samaj; yet possessing these three valuable qualifications, namely, that they long to serve the good cause, and endeavour to serve it for its own sake and in the name of God, and strive to make themselves efficient in that service. They love the cause because it is God's cause; and they appraise themselves only as they are devoted to the cause. Apparent blanks though in the secular estimates

of the world, they are, nevertheless, gifted ones in the Spirit, and chosen ones of the Spirit. Their field of work ranges over a fairly large area between Ganjam and Nellore Districts. And these young men form connecting links between the several Samajes. There is still another feature which, somewhat foreign to you here, is of special note to us there. Here, as one becomes a member of the Brahma Samaj, it follows — at least for many a decade now it has been the case—that he becomes an *anushtanic*, pledged to rule his life according to the Brahma ideal in its entirety. But not always so in the South and probably in the West of India. Many there are, associated as worshippers with the various congregations; they assent to all the principles of the Samaj and give effect to them in life so far as circumstances permit it. But when it comes to particular acts in domestic circles, they conform to ways that are not a correct expression of Brahmaism. Therefore, it becomes a proof of efficiency, as to how many have taken the vow of *anushtan* for the whole cycle of life. After all, who can claim that he has practised consistent adherence to the all too exacting, though invigorating, ideal? Nevertheless, we have our own outstanding examples of loyalty to the light in them through

the whole round of domestic and social engagements, in despite of the hundred and one smart and stings to which that loyalty is subjected. Not a few have chosen to bear the cross, not as a God-imposed burden, but even as a God-granted opportunity. They have been suffering; but they bear it all with courage and thankfulness. And as the leaven leaveneth the community slowly but surely by the operation of the Holy Spirit, it is a matter for both gratification and gratitude to note, in regard to some of these, that their neighbours are led to see that Brahmaism is an influence for spiritual vigour which must compel admiration. One of the several ways of public recognition of this worth is that, when any general undertaking has to be broached through one whose spiritual attitude could be commonly trusted, they think of a Brahmo. Also, just as, in the more secular concerns, people repair for consultation and co-operation to those possessed of what is styled worldly wisdom and experience; so when they feel prompted to have an opening prayer for a general gathering, they look to a Brahmo to lead in it, because he alone can do it with a widely acceptable appeal. Further, one other phase of our position is in regard to women. It is common knowledge that in the concerns of spiritual development, the males figure

forth while the females lag or are left behind. As an esteemed brother of ours there, Chilakamarti Lakshmi Narasimham Garu, once put it in pointed sarcasm, the husband, as a rule, turns to *manasik-aradhana* and the wife to *mrūṇmayaradhana*. But we have, for sometime now, passed from the stage of the men alone accepting the Brahmic rule of life to that of women also keeping pace with them. This is really an occasion for thankfulness—the *sādharmacharini* walking step in step with her consort. Lastly, as elsewhere, so in the Telugu area, there has come, of late, a wave of what is named nationalism or *swaraj*; and it has tended to submerge our other general interests for the time being. At present, it will be a fairly correct statement to make that the attention of most of the leading spirits is not drawn towards the distinguishing characteristics of the Brahma Samaj so prominently or sympathetically as was the case sometime back. As, in connection with the social reform programme, there be several who have come to declare, 'Get *Swaraj*, and social reform will follow,' and some others who have stopped short with side-tracking themselves into 'social service'; 'so, in regard to the question of religious reform, there are many who imagine that patriotism

demands adherence to the traditional ways of the land. Hence, the Brahma Samaj does not today strike the imagination of so many as it used to do before. There is in us, however, the trust that the nation cannot but come, ere long, to realise that the path which it, at present, prefers to tread is only a blind alley.

Consequently, whether here or elsewhere in the country, we are called upon to trust and worship and work and wait. Through His grace, things are bound to assume a brighter aspect. The one condition pre-requisite is that every one amongst us must feel and say, 'So far as God grants me the opportunity, I will endeavour to live the message faithfully and present it truthfully,' so that those around shall be constrained to witness the workings of the Divine Spirit in men's hearts and homes. When I fail to retire into solitude with my God any morning before the day's work or any evening before the night's repose, do I feel that I have not merely missed a desirable engagement but lost the very happiness of life? Reform must start with me before I can go out to the world and say, 'Behold the marvel!' 'Self-invigoration' and 'self-purification'—do you call it? No, not I; for He does it all in me. Then, unless the door of

the worshipping soul is kept always open for Him and the spirit of spontaneous responsiveness to the holy influences is cultivated with increasing vigour, it will be a tame, feeble cause that the Brahma Samaj works for.

(After a reference to the coming Centenary celebrations—their significance, their inspiration, and the duty owing from every member and sympathiser to strive to make them a great success, enduring in its invigorating results, the remarks concluded)—‘ I have rather audaciously given myself a long—far too long a—tether; and craving your forgiveness for this strain upon your indulgence, I beg to close at this point. I most heartily and respectfully thank you once again for the extremely generous sentiments expressed of me this evening. The memory of this glad occasion will be long cherished by me. My humble salutations to you all ! ’

XIII

ANTI-UNTOUCHABILITY

(1925)

Far from having done a favour to any one in this connection (as so generously supposed by the two esteemed gentlemen who have moved and seconded the proposition for calling me to the chair), I sincerely believe that a real favour has been done to myself in thus being given an opportunity for acknowledging that I, too, am within the fold of those penitent persons who keenly feel that this age-long offence of India should be wiped out—rather, adequately atoned for. So long as we zealously devote ourselves to this ennobling task, there can arise no question of untouchability, except with reference to only one individual; and that is the remorseful suppliant himself. The question I have to put is not whether my brother *A* or my sister *B* is touchable or untouchable. The test question I have to ask myself is: With the taint of this social sin in me, with the burden of

* Some parts of the presidential remarks at the first Madras Provincial Anti-Untouchability Conference, opened in the Victoria Public Hall, Madras, by the Maharajah Saheb of Pithapuram, C. B. E. (31-10-25).

this dread iniquity upon me, with the contaminated atmosphere of pride and passion around me, am *I* fit to be touched; can *I* reckon myself to be one of the touchables? Therefore, when this issue of touchability or untouchability arises, the heart-searching question to ask is: Have I the right to determine who is touchable and who is untouchable, except with reference to myself? In this connection, let me advert to the inspiring incident in the life of Jesus with reference to the woman alleged to have been caught in the very act of a criminal offence and brought to him for judgment. He exemplifies to us the right attitude and the proper spirit for a correct approach to this great problem. In that spirit alone I humbly endeavour, at all times, to understand it.

Now, let us turn attention to a few of the details of what we should do in this respect. It is quite true that these so-called untouchables would be hastening the day of their general recognition as touchables, if they should outgrow certain undesirable habits and practices. All that may be undeniable. But then, there exists such a principle as 'reciprocity.' Only to the extent to which we make them feel that we are one with them—rather, that they are admittedly of us, will those habits and

practices be discarded. Otherwise, they are bound to stagnate where they now are. It is said of Emerson that a certain person, a mere washer-woman, was among those that frequently attended his discourses. And when she was questioned how much she understood of that transcendentalist's sublime utterances, she said, 'Whatever else it might be, he tells me this one thing, namely, that I am not a God-forsaken sinner and that I can really be a good woman. He tells me that I, too, am worth something in the sight of God and there is something in me by which I may become sublime and noble. He is certainly the person whom I shall follow.' Swami Vivekananda gives the right direction: Do not go and tell an erring person, 'You are a sinner,' but tell him, 'You can be a saint.' Likewise, we wish these communities to understand that they are dear to us, flesh of our flesh and blood of our blood, and, therefore, we feel that we are hampered, we are humiliated, we are, in every sense of the expression, held down, as we stand apart from them, and we desire to own and have them with us for our own good. Let this message of fellowship go forth to them. Let us prove by our regard and affection for them that they are dear to us; and thus let us make ourselves dear to them. It is absolutely true that their

ways must change and their environment be improved ; but the most essential thing is that each one of us must feel that, as an indispensable, inalienable part of his duty, he must do something—I will not say, for the amelioration of those depressed, but for his own self-improvement, that he may thus be better fitted to be their brother. His concern should be, ‘ What shall I do in my day, in my sphere, to prove clearly my interest in, and my affection for, them ? ’

Whatever may be our denominational relations, on this question of anti-untouchability, we are all the kith and kin, the flesh and blood, of those who are called the depressed classes. According to a certain school of profoundly deep-sighted teachers, to *know* we should *become* the object to be known ; there can be no true knowing but through spiritual becoming. Unless we identify ourselves with them to this intimate degree, this question will *not* be satisfactorily solved. It is not in a spirit of patronage, it is not from its necessity for the political advancement of the country, it is not even as an expression of social justice, it is wholly and essentially on the basis of the righteous dispensation of God, which treats all as the equal enjoyers of His blessing, that we have

to address ourselves to the solution of this problem. Mrs. Grundy has no place in this business, when my own spiritual progress is concerned. I live in the sight of God ; and let that be my witness and testimony. The late Mr. Ananda Mohan Bose, in his Presidential Address at the National Congress held at Madras in 1898, gave the message of ' love and service ' and observed that the two sentiments were inseparable. No service is real service unless inspired by love ; and no love is true love unless bestowing itself in service. Love and service are born twins in the soul of man. I love, and hence I serve ; I serve, for I love. God grant that this spirit of love and service be the leading light and the pervading atmosphere of this Conference and the impelling motive of our labours after the session !

XIV

HIGHER MORALITY AND DEEPER SPIRITUALITY.

(1931)

Om! Our humble salutations and our reverent obeisances unto the *Ekeswara*, the One Supreme God! He the Creator, He the Protector, He the Preserver—He is the One God that is All-in-all and our All; and unto Him we proffer our hearts' richest offerings of love and worship. Blessed be His name that He has brought us here together on this happy, auspicious occasion! Rejoice we in Him that He has thus revealed unto us the wisdom and likewise the happiness of being united in His worship as brothers and sisters.

Oh Thou, our dear God, the beloved One of the heart of each one of Thy children! Thou art Clemency itself, Love itself, Grace itself, Holiness itself. With instinctive adherence and spontaneous loyalty, we cling to Thee and we behold

* Presidential remarks at Brahmopasana Mandir, Cocanada, at the 101st anniversary of the Brahma Mandir and Trust-Deed of Rajah Ram Mohan Roy (25-1-1931).

in Thy countenance alike the charm that wins and the holiness that sanctifies. Do Thou, on this solemn occasion, fill our souls brimful with the sacred sense of Thy holy presence in all that we say and feel and do here. May we be quickened with the influence and the inspiration of Thy Holy Spirit in ourselves; and may we, in all that we say and think here, be fully and faithfully loyal to the one object of our life—the proclamation of Thy glory and Thy grace to all nations! Blessed be Thy name now and for ever!

SISTERS AND BROTHERS,

We are here, as I take it that a good many of you are aware, to celebrate, on this occasion, the hundred and first return of that very momentous day in the history not only of India but, as I dare to think, of the whole world—the day on which Rajah Ram Mohan Roy, standing amidst a faithful and devout band of three hundred kindred souls, consecrated, for the worship of the One Supreme God in spirit and in truth, in love and in righteousness, that temple known as the first Brahma Mandir. I do believe that as men's minds are widened and their outlook is enlarged, the day will come, and that too, as I pray, before long,

when, with a sense of grateful appreciation, it will be recognised that this was a most momentous occasion in the history of the race. So far as my brief observation reports, the divergent channels of human activity are seen to exhibit a constant tendency to be drawn, in ever-increasing closeness, towards a convergent point. This was from the very start the purpose of God in creating the human race in diverse regions and beneath different skies. But unto the weak vision of most men, the steady convergence of tribes and nations does not disclose itself until an advanced stage is reached in the growth of human thought and the deepening of human insight. And of all the various processes in the commingling of ideas and ideals, the latest to come into clear view is the confluence of the religious beliefs and aspirations of mankind. Therefore, it was a great day when, in a concrete, visualised form, the genius of Rajah Ram Mohan Roy planned and presented this specific instance of the proved possibility of embodying in one broad-based institution the ideals and aspirations dear to the spirit of man. Whatever may be the later history of his movement and however short it may fall of its own lofty aim, let it always be distinctly recognised that Ram Mohan was the prophet of the unity, the solidarity, of the human spirit. My dear

old pupil, Prof. Ramaswamy, is put down to speak tomorrow on the subject, 'Is Brahmaism eclectic?' I believe he proposes to discuss his subject on this basis that Brahmaism is not a medley but a harmony; its method is not eclectic but synthetic. Now, Ram Mohan was the far-sighted pioneer who first proclaimed the verified possibility of the union of all believers and worshippers in the harmony of one ideal, one aspiration, one endeavour and one fellowship. Consequently, we are here, on this occasion, to rejoice in that grand message. I have a great mind, at the present moment, to unfold this aspect, so far as it lies in me, through a particular illustration. Ram Mohan, as I say, was a gifted harmoniser of religious beliefs and ideals. In accordance with this lofty aim, he presented to the followers of each of the various faiths those noble elements in it which fitted admirably into this praiseworthy purpose of being harmonised with other faiths and fused with them into one conjoint hope and aspiration for all. So he published very informing and illuminating tracts bearing on the faith of the Hindus as deposited in the Upanishads and also, to a certain extent, in the Brahma Sutras. Likewise, to the Christians he strove to present those essential elements in their scripture

which could be worked into harmony with other faiths, and, to this end, published a tract which, even to this day, appears remarkable as a far-sighted production—‘The Precepts of Jesus, the Guide to Peace and Happiness,’ consisting of extracts from the three Synoptic Gospels with a few excerpts from St. John’s.

I wish to dwell upon one of these saving truths which he culled and collected into the ‘Precepts of Jesus’. I refer to the very touching, intensely human story that a certain woman was caught in the very act of sexual misconduct and was brought to Jesus by the representatives of the old Judaic faith. ‘This woman has been caught in the immoral act!’ ‘What then?’ the Master asks. ‘According to the law of Moses which we obey, this woman deserves to be stoned to death!’ ‘Is that so?’ ‘Yes.’ ‘Then, let him cast the first stone that has not sinned in his heart!’ And it is said—how graphic and impressive a description of the whole situation!—Jesus looks down as if absorbed in his own thoughts; and after a while, he lifts his head and finds none but the solitary accused. He asks her, ‘Where are thy accusers?’ ‘Rabbi, they have dropped off one after another. They dared not accuse me of this wrong!’ ‘Neither do

I accuse thee. Go thy way and sin no more !' I hold that, in point of the profoundest sympathy with the throbbings of the human heart, there cannot be a more moving example of what may be called genuine, trustful love for the human soul. It is easy, very easy, to take the word 'love' upon the lip. But when it comes to be put to the test, how bankrupt we betray ourselves to be ! Here is our noble Master who applies the crucial test to the conscience of man, when he says, 'Let him cast the first stone who has not sinned in his heart !' As the Bible puts it in striking language, to covet is to steal ; to hate is to kill ; to cast an eye of lust is to commit adultery. That is the essence of spiritual morality—not what we profess but what we practise ; and even here, as Carlyle says, the practice, not of the inferior criminality of abstaining from the wrong deed, but the superior morality of cultivating the right spirit. The former is possible to many ; but not so the latter, which denotes the inflexible fidelity, the soul-deep affinity, of man to God. As the Iranian scripture ordains, the test is threefold : *manasni*, with mind ; *govasni*, with speech ; and *kunasni*, with action. With these tests thou shalt satisfy thy conscience. If the desire in thy mind, the speech on thy tongue and the deed of thy hand

are alike of the right spirit, then alone thou art truly moral and really pious. As a certain preacher has observed, how amazing are the inconsistency and the hypocrisy that speak in heaven but live in hell! Here was Jesus, who drove home the truth, 'Art thou true unto the best in thee? Then alone thou art fit to judge others!' In that very instructive address which we had the privilege of listening to yesterday, we noticed how Moulana Jaluluddin Rumi pointed out that we are so prompt to judge others and so slow to judge ourselves. There is a suggestive thought in which this human weakness has been disclosed. Every person is said to carry two baskets—one in the front and the other in the rear. In the front one are exposed the faults of others; and in the rear one are hidden away one's own faults. How unhesitatingly—nay, even ardently—we go about reflecting on the wrongs done by others, in the pharisaical spirit, 'Great God, we are thankful we are not like unto these people; we are better, we are purer.'! All the great masters have insisted: 'Before you judge others, judge yourself.' That is a genuine man who is his own accuser, his own juror and his own judge. If at that acute-witted tribunal one can acquit oneself, one is *dhanya*

blessed. Here we are told, 'Let him cast the first stone that has not sinned in the heart!' This, indeed, is the supreme rule of life for every true man: 'Before thou shalt point out the little mote in the eye of thy neighbour, beware that thou hast not a beam in thine own eye.' If only we bore in mind this great warning, how charitable, how full of amenities, how reluctant to point the finger at others and how ready to welcome the admonition from others we should become!

The next point is this. What about him or her that is reported to have been caught red-handed? 'I, too, do not accuse; because, more than my accusation, there is seated in that heart of thine a mentor who shall lay bare to thee the real enormity of thine own evil-doing!' In the popular adage, 'చేసినపాపం చెప్పితే పోతుంది' (The sin committed disappears when confessed), the intent is that I am on the half-way to redemption, when I can bring myself to disclose the evil done by me. To begin to evince a dislike for the dark spots is to set the face towards the high stars. Hence the golden rule: '*I shall not accuse thee; rather, let thy own better self accuse thee.*' And this is so, even because self-indictment is infinitely more difficult of evasion

and also more efficacious for regeneration than impeachment by any fellow-man from a superior seat. Mark, too, the one vital condition of forgiveness: 'Sin no more.' Once for all, let it be realised that in all moral and spiritual struggles, the real fight ought to be between principle and principle, never between person and person. Then, as principles are made to harmonise, the hitherto divergent becomes the convergent hereafter. If so, the only correct test is that which Jesus applies to the erring woman: 'Go thy way; and sin no more, not only in act but even in thought.' And there is no reprobate whom we should reject—even as God does not despair of any—as beyond the reach of Divine grace. Here there are three great truths to lay to heart deeply. Firstly, unto God, with His persevering goodness and His loving mercy, there is absolutely no lost creature, however atrociously evil. There is ever the dear one yet to be redeemed and restored to the Parental bosom. However low, fallen and abject, still the child of God, with all his iniquity, is dear and welcome unto God's sanctifying embrace. Secondly, as to 'punishment,' simply efface that word from the dictionary of the spirit. God only purifies, renders clean, what has become sin-stained, and

redeems what has been bartered away to vice. Punishment—by whom and of whom? By the father and of the child? Unthinkable! In God's family, there is no punishment but only purification, unless you hold that the goldsmith who purifies a piece of gold is therein also punishing that piece. All that in the harrowing hour of remorse we name punishment is really God's purifying process. We are being tempered in baths of tears to be made sound. In the Divine household, there is no outcast dismissed with 'Get thee away from My sight'; there is no disinherited prodigal; but all are held equally dear. 'Go thy way and sin no more' is the only charge—of course, a heavy charge. Aye, your regeneration is God's own concern. There is a Vaishnava teaching: 'My salvation? Why worry over it? It is my Maker's concern. He has ordained that I should be saved. On my side, my only business is to submit to the will of Him who is the Lord of salvation.' God is the God of salvation, not of perdition; of redemption, not of desertion; of cure, not of curse. A great, good and loving God of grace is here, ever solicitous. Even the vilest of sinners, tainted with the foulest of sins, may yet say to himself, 'My God wants me; He has

assumed the responsibility of saving me.' Thirdly, even in the most sin-tainted soul, there is repositied a germ of the holy spirit of God. Iniquity absolute, devoid of all touch of the Divine, is inconceivable. However fallen a person, however sunk in the quagmire of sin, never fancy that he is lost—irretrievably lost. No, not lost, because in him there is an imperishable seed of good which must grow and bear fruit in the fulness of God's time. In every bosom, however degenerate and iniquitous, there is a germ of the Divine; and God applies Himself to it, undeterred by the accumulation of all the dirt and filth, the taint and tarnish, of sin. With the insight of infinite goodness, He perceives the germ embedded within and brings to bear upon it the cleansing powers of grace; and there starts the process of salvation. Be he a sinner caught in the act of sin; yet probe into the depths of his being, and you will discover, amidst the abasement of carnal desires, an element, an instinct, that is akin to the Divine. Enfolded in every bosom, there is a germ of divinity so fecund, so productive, that, through the grace of God, it must unfold into the full bloom of a regenerated spirit. Tennyson's Lancelot bitterly grieves over the bonds of sin that have so utterly discredited

and defamed him ; and he frantically cries out,

‘My God,
I pray Him, send a sudden Angel down
To seize me by the hair and bear me far
And fling me deep.’

Yet the poet concludes with—

‘So groaned Sir Lancelot in remorseful pain,
Not knowing he should die a holy man.’

Francis Thompson puts a kindred idea thus. We say, ‘Judge, not as God would judge, but as man would—that is, not by the lofty, austere standard of the Divine but according to our own frail companions’ ‘standard of the erring flesh.’ But this is an utterly mistaken notion. Man’s judgment of man is but the surface view. Divine wisdom, on the other hand, goes to the inmost core of the being and notes every iota of potential worth and merit, and the fullest credit is given for even a touch of goodness. Man judges in the gross : seventy *per cent* bad and thirty *per cent* good ; and, therefore, deserving of condemnation. God, however, says, ‘The seventy *per cent* is of the earth—transient, while the thirty *per cent* is of Heaven—permanent. Invested in the Bank of grace, the thirty *per cent* will soon exceed

the seventy.' Let our prayer, therefore, be: 'Judge even as God would judge, not skin-deep but penetratingly; judge, not with the purblind eye, but with the probing heart.' Miss Cobbe asks, 'What is the Nile, as it is in the map before us?' A tiny, narrow streamlet here and a big, broad current there; but all passing before the eye piecemeal. Yet unto God, the whole length being taken in at a single gaze, the mighty flow of waters is one panorama of beauty and grandeur which man, the creature of time and space, can never adequately vision. So, from the dawn of time to the close of time, from the animal to the angel, the pilgrim-progress of the soul is one endless procession of grace and benediction. Hence, the mandate of mercy unto the sinner, 'Go thy way and sin no more.' The lesson, then, is: God is the God of love and grace and holds every one, however lowly, dear in a manner and to a degree of which we have and can have no correct conception. He thus draws close to every heart, as the engaging, attracting, winning, enrapturing God. Evermore, He is my God, near and dear, perceived and enjoyed by me; no longer an echo of the sages' utterance. Into the depths of my degradations, He comes. To fancy God as secluded in far-off regions, as seated on the

lofty mountain-summit is easy enough. But the harder as also the deeper experience is to realise that God is here and near, inwoven into all my concerns—a lamp unto the feet and a light unto the eye—not merely the transcending God but the companioning God. Say not that God is the God of the ancestors alone or of only sages and saints. Why, every beat of the heart, every throb of the pulse, bears immediate testimony to God as even my God and your God. Unto the faltering, He is the steadying God; unto the lowly, He is the companioning God; unto the struggling, He is the sustaining God; unto the erring, He is the redeeming God; unto the sinning, He is the saving God. He is my All and your All. Fight not shy of this immanence of God; but approach Him with the assurance—the freedom and the trust—of a child.

This, with all its rich implications, comprises Rajah Ram Mohan Roy's message to the world. And why and how is this a message to the world? Here I shall recall a line from the memorial verses composed on the demise of the Rajah in 1833 at Bristol. That great man—the morning-star of our modern day—closed his earthly career on the 27th September of that year; and

as natural to the solemn event, there was grief among those who had seen and known, understood and admired him. That feeling expressed itself in various forms. One remarkable verse then composed declared the Rajah's noble message to be—'Nations, behold your God! Rejoice, rejoice!' It was an appeal not to any one section of mankind; but it was a universal message delivered to all the nations. That God who had been veiled behind the apathies and antipathies of man was again to be visioned with the vividness of direct perception and immediate experience. With the authority of one who had himself communed with the Spirit of God, Ram Mohan proclaimed it to all his fellow-men: Behold your God, not self-veiled into the remote in time or space, but ever-present before and behind you, within and without you, besetting you all round and sustaining you through all the processes of life. Behold Him, with the vividness of direct perception, as the only Reality, the vital Substance of the whole creation, the bed-rock Basis of the entire universe, the primal Source of all that is, holding in eternal order and coherence the complete structure of the cosmos. God, then, is the ever-present God to be seen, felt, realised and enjoyed. Behold Him

and rejoice. It is not the overpowering, over-awing God that by His transcendence outreaches, by His profundity baffles and by His infinitude overwhelms you, but the loving, winning God you are to rejoice in. And as you thus rejoice, the only natural and legitimate way to evince your rejoicings, is to rejoice in one another. It has been put allegorically that, as the devotees danced in rapture around the Lord of their hearts, they rejoiced, too, in one another. So, as you rejoice in the Creator, you rejoice in the peoples created to inhabit the universe. When this reciprocity becomes ensured between soul and soul, between community and community, all feuds cease and all strifes are hushed into harmony by virtue of the worth and the beauty perceived in one another. In fact, only when we rejoice in others do we rejoice in ourselves. Then, as the nations rejoice in one another and you thereby and therein rejoice in yourselves, every movement of your person becomes a note in the music that keeps time with the symphony of the whole universe. As you thus rejoice, you feel assured that out of the joy of harmony the universe has come into being—not the propulsion of might, not the reflection of wisdom, but the emanation of joy. God, in His infinite joy, His inexhaustible *anandam*, has ushered

forth creation as the off-spring of joy. He is the God of joy ; and His creation is creation in joy. Rejoice in one another, because in each soul there is a repository of that joy divine. And as linking nation and nation, the League of Nations of the present day is only a casual expression of international joy. Behind this august Institution, as its background, there must be the confraternity of the whole of humanity as the creation, in joy, of a God of joy. When this spiritual affinity is established, the nations must, and cannot but, form a league ; and the advancing ages will form an ever-growing symphony, the last note in complete accord with the first. And then nations, as components of an organic whole, will be sustained by the strength of one another. So shall wrangling cease and war itself be outlawed ; and so shall the entire creation ring with a hosanna unto Love. Hence, he who has love in his bosom has his incomings and outgoings in God ; and he whose life is lived in love becomes the radiant mirror of the glory of Love. ‘ Nations, behold your God ! Rejoice, rejoice ! ’ And on this account, Rajah Ram Mohan Roy was not merely the prophet of his country and the light-bringer unto his time ; but so long as peace is prized, harmony aspired after and

the resultant joy held in dear esteem, his voice, with growing intensity and increasing authority, shall be reiterating the message, 'Nations, behold your God! Rejoice, rejoice.' May that message enter and dwell in the heart of each one of us; and the rule of life for every one be so to contribute to the joy of all that in universal brotherhood shall be the consummation of individual good! May the spirit of this evangel abide in the souls, work in the lives and predominate in the duties and pursuits of the whole human race!

Om! Harih Om!

SERVICES

AND

SERMONS.

I

SERVICE: *

KARUNA AND SANTHI.

(1931)

UDBODHANA.

HYMN—*Enthati karunyudey Paramatmudenthati
karunyudey* (Telugu)

Om ! Karunyamayaye namah !

Our humble salutations, our reverent obeisances, we tender unto Him who is the Ocean of Mercy. Does it not pass a thrill through our entire frame as that all-reassuring, all-endearing, all-sanctifying name, *Karunyamaya*, is uttered? Sanctified is the very tongue which shapes that holy word on it; and beatitude is the blessing received into the soul which rejoices in that all-enrapturing name, *Karunyamaya*. Is it the exclamation of bare wonder or is it the ejaculation of profound adoration, as we sing, '*Enthati karunyudey Paramatmudenthati karunyudey !*' (How

* In Pithapuram Palace (29-10-'31).

merciful is the Supreme Lord! How merciful!)? Does it not construe our whole life as beneficently purposeful, if by His grace we are trained and taught to pronounce, in a rejoicing and adoring spirit, this transporting name of God, *Karunyamaya*? How far 'fairer than the fabled Eden' would this earth be, if only in every moment of our life we should be eager, if with every heave of the bosom and every beat of the heart we should be impelled, to utter with vivid understanding, with profound and exulting conviction, this holy and blessed name of God, *Karunyamaya*? It needs the aid of no material rosary to revolve on the deep meanings of this sacred name. It comes of the incessant and immediate working of the benignant spirit of *Karunyamaya* that our whole being is perennially purified and strengthened with every heart-beat and every bosom-heave. Does there flit any object before the eye or any thought before the mind that will not—oh, if only we had the insight of faith!—declare to us that the whole universe, in its myriad manifestations, is verily the divine delight, the *anandaleela*, of *Karunyamaya*, the God of all mercies? Silence is pregnant with His mercy; speech is eloquent with His mercy; every sound is a note in the universal *hosanna* of His

mercy; all our senses are attuned to the one song in praise of His mercy; our whole career is sanctified with the holy influences of His mercy; society is the far-sighted ordinance of His mercy; every relationship, weaving a silken tie of strength and sanctification for the soul, is an enduring testimony to His mercy. All that the ages have recorded, all that the sages have visioned, all that the saints have realised, all that the prophets have proclaimed, all that the toilers have wrought, all that the meek have endured, all that the faithful have witnessed, and all that the sinning like me have experienced even through heart-anguish—all, all are but the many manifestations of His mercy. The firm earth under the foot, the canopying firmament over the head, the embracing atmosphere penetrating every pore of the body, the revivifying showers sent from on high, the green and gold that adorn the face of the globe spring after spring,—these all are the world-wide expressions, even divine messages unto our souls, of His *karuna*—His clemency, His benignity, His parental attachment, unto every one of us. Need we be taught by precept and example to worship this *Karunyamaya*, this All-merciful God? Is not the heart impelled from within to leap forth and embrace this Beloved One; and is not the soul

keeping fast and vigil to hail the Hallowed One into the sanctuary of worship? Ask of the vilest sinner; and, if only he has felt a single pang of penitence, he will proclaim with all the ardour of anguishing experience that God is evermore *Karunyamaya*. I slip down into the abysmal depths of iniquity; and thither He descends to reach down to me! If that is not mercy, divine devotion to the salvation of every soul, words mean nothing and thoughts are idle fancy. He is *Karunyamaya*, the God of all mercies; He is unto us our All-in-all. And such is the marvel of His mercy that, importing Himself into us through a thousand means and media, He unceasingly seeks to bring it home to us that we are nestled and nursed in His mercy and our blessedness lies ever in turning to Him and declaring with adoring souls, 'Thou art the God of mercy. When I have Thee, I have my All'. What avails it, if position, power, all that the world prizes and covets, comes to us but does not bring with it, oh, the comforting, cheering, entrancing joy that all that comes to us is from Him and should be received as from Him and rendered thanks for unto Him? And what matters it if all that the world, in the infatuations of the moment and the

day, clings to as the very essence of life, vanishes into mere mist, if only unto our so-called bereaved hearts is vouchsafed the assurance and the resultant joy that all may be lost but God is not, can never be, lost? Aye, all may vanish, only that, thereby, God may vision Himself the more gloriously. It is the mist cleared, the distraction removed, the ignorance dispelled, the infatuation disabused; and nothing really amiss. We have our All, when we have Him. Losing Him, we have naught; we are naught, absolute nullity. It is even through the mere grace of *Karunyamaya* that unto us is granted the sovereign right to receive Him and rejoice in Him as our own beloved God. Having Him, we have all; and having our all in Him, we shall render our all unto Him; and rendering our all unto Him, we shall for ever, even with the ever-insatiable hunger and thirst of the soul for the Holy One, adore and glorify Him as our own beloved God of all mercies. All ages have proclaimed Him the Compassionate God, the Merciful God, the Loving God. If only we knew that truth, love would be the most vital principle, the master-passion, of our lives; and in love alone we should live, move and have our being. Blessed, blessed, be the name of *Karunyamaya*, the God of all mercies!

ARADHANA.

*Om ! Sathyam, Jnanamanantham, Brahma ;
Anandaropa mamritham yadvibhathi ; Santham,
Sivamadwaitham ; Suddhamapapaviddham !*

Our Ever-adorable God ! This hoary, sacred chant it has been our privilege and our happiness to sanctify ourselves by repeating on untold occasions. And yet its profound significance, its measureless meaning, we have not yet been able, and we thank Thee that we shall never be able, to exhaust with our poor understanding. Thou art eternally the Inscrutable, the Unfathomable, the Incomprehensible. And therein consists man's salvation that it is this Infinite One that is the quest and the desire, the hunger and the thirst, of his soul. If only to our growth through ages were assigned a limit, ah, death would be the conqueror and annihilation the end of the world. But no ; we are of and in and for the Infinite ; and the revelation of the Infinite Spirit to the infinitely growing finite soul extends even through infinite duration, through the eternity that absorbs the bounds of time. Thus Thou art alike the perennial Quest and the perpetual Satisfaction of our souls. And herein lies the matchlessness, the unique incomparable magnitude, of Thy

mercy for us that Thou hast thus designed us for Thyself. Thou holdest every one intensely dear unto Thee. The humblest and lowliest is precious unto Thee as a child. And we feel for ever assured of growth and progress and advancement in knowledge and wisdom, in purity and piety, in love and sanctity, because we are the beloved ones of the Infinite One. We bow before Thee ; but we feel baffled in expression to denote what our bowing signifies. It is not dependence, not gratitude, not homage, not reverence, that prompts us to bow ; but that solemn awe which signifies unto our souls, ‘ Your God is the supreme Sanctity, the sublime Holiness ; and you shall bow before Him, not like the subject, not like the child, not even like the spouse, but as a self-surrendering ; self-dedicating sacrament that He may deign to accept you and, in accepting you, bless you and, in blessing you, fulfil His purpose in you ’. To render back unto Thee every iota of my having and of my doing and of my being—that is the significance of my awe-inspired bowing before Thee. I decline, I dread, I abhor the idea of living apart from Thee, of standing aside from Thee, even by a single breath of separation. I would be merged in the Infinite, not to be lost but to be assumed, resumed, regenerated into an

issue—an off-shoot—of the Infinite. As I thus render myself unto Thee, I behold Thee, in all the glory of Thy holy being, everywhere—in every thought of the mind, in every throb of the heart, in every fleeting moment, in every passing occurrence—in all the glory of heavenly holiness. That is the vision of bliss, the ecstasy of beatitude, the sanctification of absorption, in living joy and in loving devotion, into the Deity. For this we render our whole-hearted thanks unto Thee—even for revealing Thyself and imparting Thyself unto us, every moment resuming us into Thyself and eternally regenerating us in Thyself. Thou art inexhaustible emanation, illimitable expansion, ever-progressive illumination, ever-sanctifying beatification. We render reverent obeisance unto Thee; and praising and glorifying Thee, we find ourselves ineffably blessed; and with this blessedness in us, we bless Thy Holy Name.

CONGREGATIONAL CHANT.

*Asathomusadgamaya, thamasomajyothirgamaya,
mrithyormamrithamgamaya, aviraveermayedhi, Rudra
yatthey dakshinam mukham, thenamampahi nithyam!*

That is our ever-lasting supplication unto Thee: Protect us, not as the dread One but as

the clement One; and in that protection, not only keep out the temptations that assail us but evoke and evolve all that is of the divine essence in our souls; and thus lead us out of untruth into truth, out of darkness into light, out of death into deathlessness. Thus wilt Thou reveal Thyself unto us and realise Thyself in us as Eternal Bliss. Hallowed be Thy name !

PRARDHANA.

HYMN—*Rammu ; na hridayammunu, Pranasa,
gaikommuu* (Telugu)

Thou art truly and verily *Santhinikethanam*, the Abode of Peace, the Home and Sanctuary of heavenly Peace. Infinite, all-embracing and all-permeating as Thou art, the whole universe, baffling in its vastness to human measurement but all comprised within Thine infinitude, is the abode, the home, the sanctum of Thee, the God of Peace. Thou art *Santhinikethanam*; and all that desire to dwell in Thee are required, invited and privileged to live the life of *santhi*. If only we saw vividly and realised with felt and enjoyed experience that Thou art *Santhinikethanam* and that we should submit ourselves to all the demands and disciplines of *santhi*, how smooth, how cheerful, how blissful

would our lives be ! In the Abode of *Santhi* we should be living tokens of, and standing testimonies to, *santhi*. With pettinesses broadened, with passions purged, with impurities cleansed, with clashes quelled, with differences levelled, with all egotistic, aggressive rivalries attuned into universal harmony, with mind and heart and soul and strength dedicated to the one prime object of eternal *santhi*, how blessed we should feel ! What has the pilgrim of *santhi* to do with aught that disturbs, opposes or repels that *santhi* ? My heart longs for *santhi*. But I should be playing the hypocrite and tempting Thy providence, if, with *santhi* upon the tongue, I should, in the least degree, be prone to any act that cuts across, or runs counter to, *santhi*. It is that *santhi* we pray for, the want of which leaves us the poor, erring, listless creatures that we are.

Thou *Santhinikethanam*, make us inmates, grant us the privilege of the beloved ones, of the Home of *Santhi*; and do Thou foster this life of *santhi* in us by an unrelenting crusade against all that wars with *santhi*. Our senses—do they turn to fleshly vileness ? Then may they benumbed into palsy, if only thus *santhi* is to be gained ! All that we desire and hold precious—may it be immolated on the altar to gain us *santhi* ! To seek to enter

into Thee as *Santhinikethanam*, and yet to be and to do that which deviates from the spirit of divine serenity—how mean, how reprehensible, this is in me! The earth below, the firmament above and the atmosphere around—all are the picture of *santhi*. And shall I alone remain within Thy domain as a rebel and a reprobate that cannot receive *santhi*—a pitiable, detestable creature that vitiates and poisons *santhi*? *Santhi* without is perceivable only by *santhi* within. Thou dost manifest Thyself in us as *Santhi*, only as we cherish Thy *santhi* in the heart. Then alone Thou art the Reality of *Santhi* when we desire and strive to dwell in Thee as the devotees of *Santhi*. To seek peace and to perpetuate strife; to pretend to propagate peace and in effect to resist peace—that has been the misery, the ruin, the horrid tragedy, of my life. Oh, Thou *Santhinikethanam*, spread Thyself around me and infuse Thyself into me. And these children of *Santhi*, may they grow more and more into the likeness of the God of *Santhi* and become increasingly habituated to, and rendered happily one with, this *santhi* of Thine! Thou *Santhinikethanam*, we desire earnestly, with all the ardour of our hearts, to dwell in *santhi*—to live *santhi* and to impart *santhi* by dwelling in Thee, the Eternal One of Inextinguishable Peace. Blessed

be Thy name ! And again, as we have sung, so do we avow and pledge to make our hearts Thy home. As *Santhinikethanam*, Thou art our Home. As *Pranesa* (Lord of our being), Thou shalt make our hearts Thy home. Our hearts—they defeat their very purpose as they pollute themselves with debasing desires and grovelling indulgences and thus cease, become unfit, to be Thy home. Then the whole trend and the sole aim of our being is ruined woefully when the heart cannot be the Home of the Holy One.

On this thrice-happy occasion, we are awakened to a new vivid sense of our fatal remissness in this paramount concern of our lives—that our hearts are made and are meant to be the sweet homes of our God. Cleanse all that is impure ; root out all that is vicious ; expel all that is distracting ; and put into our hearts the purest, tenderest affection and attachment for Thee. All thoughts turned into a contemplation of Thee, all desires directed into a longing for Thee, all aspirations exalted into the worship of Thee, and all words tuned into the praise of Thee, may we, in body, mind, soul and strength, become shrines of Thee, the *Santhinikethanam* and the *Pranesa* ! This is our humble supplication ; do Thou most mercifully grant it unto these, Thy reverent adorers !

ASEESH.

May the God of *Santhi* vouchsafe that His *santhi* abide in the heart of every one present here and in the home of every family around! May His *santhi* permeate all communities and knit nation with nation! May His *santhi* become an all-embracing, all-gladdening blessing which shall draw the stars above and the flowers below into the rhythmic joy of the cosmic praise and glory of our God! Blessed, blessed be His name, now and for ever!

Om! Brahma Kripahi Kevalam!

Om! Santhih! Santhih! Santhih!

Om! Harih Om!

II
SERVICE *
with Sermon on
RELIGION AND LIFE.
(1928)

UDBODHANA.

Om! Thanks and salutations do we tender unto Him whose *Karunyam*, whose ceaseless, inexhaustible compassion, we have so aptly sung and glorified! He is the God of compassion—not merely the God of mercy that creates and provides; not merely the God of tenderness that fosters and cherishes; not merely the God of love that embraces and blesses. Unto us, the humble and the lowly, the foot-sore and the way-worn, He is the God of infinite compassion. The essence of His compassion is in this that He not only likes us and cares for us but also most intimately feels with us, applies Himself unto all the numberless happenings, joys and sorrows,

* At the Brahmopasana Mandir, Cocanada, on the eve of the organisation of the Brahma Samaj Centenary Celebrations in Andhradesa (13-7-28).

aspirations and compunctions, of our individual lives. The compassionate God does not merely watch and guide us; but He impels every throb and movement of our being with intense concern and incessant care. Not with concern or with anxiety but with serene sympathy He enters into our lives. Pulsates not my heart now with joy and anon with sorrow but He shares in the experience as if His own. I shed the sweet, balmy drops of faith and hope or the bitter, burning drops of remorse and penitence. The sweetness He enriches; the anguish He soothes. Thus He is my own God, not merely as the Author of my life and the Caterer unto my wants and the Guide unto my path, but as the compassionating Companion who shares, even in His Divine immanence, in all the concerns and interests of my life—the heavenly Balm that heals, the ministering Mercy that quells the fire and allays the pain. He is the compassionate God whose solicitude for even this miserable me His infinite goodness alone can evince. Like the light from the Sun which, in its stintless abundance, surpasses the needs of every tiny plant and every puny satellite, His compassion floods us all around, outmeasuring not merely our deepest gratitude but even our amplest expectations. Every pore in the body He has the

care to count and cleanse; every thought in the mind He has the wisdom to grasp and guide; every beat of the heart He has the potency to sustain and support; every aspiration in the soul He has the grace to fulfil and sanctify. For ever, through time and beyond time, abiding as the Fount of life, He is the compassionate God who makes our being possible, endurable, enjoyable, imperishable. Did He not feel with us, enter as Fellow-enjoyer or Co-sharer into our delights or distresses, oh, how our delights would deluge us and our distresses would drown us! He augments them where they need His benediction, and assuages them where they need His solace. He is the feeling God; and unto Him we bear our heartiest testimony as the God of measureless compassion. It counts as His richest gift that, unto us, mere floating motes in the vastness of His creation, valueless as the dust that drifts away, worthless as the grass that perishes, even unto us He has vouchsafed this privilege of coming into direct contact with Him, of feeling heart to heart with Him and of communing soul to soul with Him. This is the supremest gift of the compassion of the Lord to the humblest of us that it exalts a creature of no moment into the darling of Eternal Love. This God of compassion we worship with all the strength

and fervour of felt bliss and enjoyed ecstasy. For, has not our gracious Lord, time and again, made Himself manifest unto us as our benign God who never fails in the amplest measure of sympathy with each one of us? Blessed be His name! Blessed be His name!

ARADHANA.

Om ! Satyam, Jnanamanantham, Brhama ; Anandaroopamamritam yadvibhathi ; Santham, Sivamadwaitam ; Suddhamapapaviddham !

We feel changed and transmuted in our very nature, broadened and expanded, deepened and exalted, as we contemplate Thee in Thy various expressions and manifestations. From all quarters and out of all the happenings of life comes the gospel-message that Thou art the God of truth, of wisdom, of infinite being, the Eternal One that abides from the beginning of time to its end. As joy inexhaustible and Life immortal, Thou dost manifest Thyself; Thou fulfillest Thy Divine purpose of creation by amplifying the one into the manifold and assuming the diverse into the one. By quelling all that is conflicting, fostering all that is unifying, stimulating all that is harmonising, strengthening

all that is uplifting, Thou resumest Thy myriad-phased manifestation, Thy self-reflecting creation, into Thine own eternal self in all perfection. Thou art the all-expressing God, the all-embracing God, the all-unifying God, the all-sanctifying God, the eternally real and abiding God. We bless and glorify Thee. The tiniest and the vastest, the lowliest and the loftiest, comprised in creation, are linked to, and unified within, Thy bountiful and sanctifying spirit. Thus we are, one and all, disclosed as being divine in origin, in function, in fulfilment, in immortal being. Blessed be Thy name that Thou hast shaped and sanctified even us into this glorious life of communion with Thee! Vouchsafe, we beseech Thee, the sweet sense, the rapturous delight, that comes of personal, intimate communion with Thee. Thou art enshrined in all Thy glory, and Thou makest Thyself manifest in all Thy beauty, in the soul of every one of us. How rare, nevertheless, is the happiness of truly and personally seeing, knowing and enjoying Thee! Golden are the opportunities when we could lose ourselves in Thee and find our all in Thee! Vouchsafe unto us this bliss of intimate communion with Thee!

DHYANAMU

followed by

GOSHTI PRARDHANA.

Asathoma Sadgamaya ; Thamasa Jyothirgamaya ; Mrithyormamrithamgamaya ; Aaviraveermayedhi, Rudra Yaththey Dakshinam Mukham, Thena Mampahi Nithyam.

As we enjoy this bliss unutterable of soul-to-soul communion with Thee, the heart desires nothing, the soul seeks nothing, beyond the deep longing and the ardent supplication, 'Do Thou for ever keep us in Thee'. Vouchsafe unto us an increasing understanding of informing truth as against misguiding falsehood ; disclose unto us the light beatific of Thy vision as against the funeral darkness that veils Thy face from our sight ; vivify every sense of our being with Thy life immortal as against slow-killing death through negligence of Thy purpose and disregard of Thy will. Thou self-revealing One, do Thou illumine us. Thou that art awe-inspiring yet clement ! 'Do Thou with Thy entrancing smile shed the lustre of bliss upon our whole being, protecting us by Thy providence, shielding us from sorrows and sins by Thy grace and imparting to us the strength to endure our cross and to do Thy will and to glorify Thy name. Blessed be Thou now and for ever !

That inspiring American poet, James Russell Lowell, has a beautiful little poem to which he gives the name of 'A Parable.' The substance of the piece is this. There was a certain person who believed in God, worshipped God, and humbly served God, but could not realise the presence of God with clearness and certainty. So he leaves his neighbourhood, ascends a lofty hill and there, turning to God, says, 'Thou art not to be found in homesteads and meadows. This sublime hill-top is Thy abode; hence I have toiled my way up here. As unto the prophets of old Thou didst reveal Thyself in unmistakable signs, amidst thunder and lightning, through fire and cloud, so do Thou now reveal Thyself unto me through some sure sign that will bring me the assurance and the joy of direct vision'. Having offered this prayer, he presses his ear against a rock and awaits the traditional thunder and lightning. There is no stir in the air, no throb in the earth, till, weary and disappointed, he opens his hungry eyes. The crust of moss gathered there has split; and through the crevice there peeps up a charming violet flower. His heart is moved with the grace of the Lord. And he exclaims, 'Thou living God, Thou

dost manifest Thyself in this way. This violet that has rent its way through the granite brings me the impressive message of the Living God that His holy spirit thus surges up in every life through oppressive circumstances. Thou art manifest even in this violet. But in the blindness of my faithless soul, I failed to recognise Thee, when my daughter produced a similar violet and presented it to me as having grown in our own court-yard ; I could not, I disdained to, see Thee in that homely violet. And I plodded up here to be informed and illumined by 'Thee through the same lovely violet. Thou art present in my very home, if only I possess the heart to receive 'Thee.'

Now, that is the true mission of Religion—not to take us out into vain wanderings far and wide in search of God, but to 'disclose unto us the truth and the joy that our dear God dwells with and in us, in our homes and in our hearts. They lived in the infant stage of the spirit's growth who sought God in signs, marvels and miracles. They that are fostered into a fuller life in God know that He is, not there on the distant mountain-top, but here within the very familiar yet not commonplace homestead where our lot is cast and our duty is done. This is the real function of Religion: to

make God the God of daily life, of the common happenings of our being. If the sinner is to endure the anguish of remorse, if the saint is to enjoy the ecstasy of communion, if the little babe, appealing with his lisp, is to grow into the eloquence of wisdom, if the friend is to be close-knit heart to heart in steadfast sympathy, if the foe is to be not merely reconciled but transmuted into the mentor, if sickness is to be not merely the purification of the body but the purgation of the soul, if poverty is to disclose the sublime truth uttered by St. Francis that the rich man is waited on by the servitor while unto the poor even God is the servitor, if our daily existence is to be made the mirror of His face and the harvest of His grace, then, Religion should be the moving factor of our common daily life, and not be confined to special occasions and select localities. What is Religion, after all? There was a little boy; and in his simple heart there arose the desire to note down every instance of kindness received. On every page in which he recorded the day's experiences, he would write: "*A* did this kindness; *B* showed this sympathy; *C* was thus serviceable". He would, however, place at the top of each page the simple words, 'Mamma' and 'Papa'; for he observed that they stood at the head of every

day—they pervaded the whole course of life during the day, and they entered into every act and enjoyment of the day. What is Religion but the spirit which, on the living tablet of the heart with its ample record of joys and sorrows, engraves at the top ‘God the Parent’? It is not an isolated fact, a specific occurrence, but a pervading sense, a permeating consciousness, an inwoven experience, through all the details of life. God is not merely the Onlooker but the Participator. The mission of Religion is not to uphold the exalted throne of God but to reach down the heart of God into the murk and mire of my own sinful life and make the process of Divine sanctification prevail even in me. God will not only rectify and redeem but so transmute and transfigure that nothing survives except the grace of God. Religion has to instil God into the entire system of life and make Him manifest throughout creation. They are yet children in Religion that see God in the stars alone. As Rabindranath has said, God can create the stars, and yet He prizes not the glory of those orbs so much as the twinkling light of the earthen lamp lit by man in his home. My little lamp is the affectionate tribute of the soul to the Giver of all light. Man thus owns himself to be the worshipper of holy light; man thus proves himself the

receptacle of heavenly light. Then, in our tiny lights of the home, our little joys and our simple enjoyments, we are to realise His presence. As Max Muller has observed, in their exaggerated admiration people seek supernatural births for their incarnations; but what is there more miraculous than the ordinary birth? If only we have the waiting and welcoming spirit of trust and devotion, we shall not fail to see that the conception and birth of every child is truly the emerging out of one more ray from the central effulgence of the God of all glory.

Here we are seated in what we believe to be a man-made edifice. But how is this different from any other place, if we do not, filled with the joy of faith, realise that, from the starting design to the final finish, it is a shrine builded by the spirit of God and that it could be a temple only when made holy by the Holy Spirit of God? Shall we, not on casual occasions alone, but on every occasion, at every foot-step, in every look and word, seek to fulfil the divine purpose of this edifice by filling it with the spirit of God as manifest in ourselves? The holy church is holy, because of the Holy Spirit which is its Indweller and because of its unifying bond of truth and love and righteousness

between the Adored and the adorers, the Worshipped and the worshippers. Thus, not with borrowed sanctimoniousness but through realised grace, with purity and piety, shall we worship the Deity as the God of truth and love and righteousness. And therein lies, for this dear church, the strength of its foundation, the endurance of its structure, the attraction of its appearance, the fulfilment, above all, of its purpose.

Again, what is the home but the lived church, even as the church is the focussed and illumined home? There into the home we carry the church to be lived once again; for, these are but two halves of one full life lived in and unto the glory of God. Says the Upanishad: Every relation is dear, not for the sake of that relation, but for the sake of the *Atman*, Brahma. There is also the complementary truth: God is dear in and through and for the sake of every relation; He becomes dear, for instance, even for the sake of my child—that incarnated spirit in the home and in society that is to prolong and perpetrate my own true self.

Verily, God is All-in-all. Divested of Him, there is no residue left. Into the food we eat, the house we live in, the avocations that bring us

strength and joy, we shall take our God who is the stay of life and the bliss of life. There is no occupation too secular, no place too worldly, no transaction too mercenary and no work too routine for God. This happy, holy, blessed experience Religion alone can give to us—even the indwelling of God, the immingling of God, the infusing of God into all our desires and deliberations, doings and dealings. Thus to assure us that He is present always and everywhere—and, hence, even now and here—that is the mission of Religion.

PRARDHANA.

Thou art the God of all compassion. Yes; for out of Thy very compassion Thou wouldst not leave any one of us to himself but must enter into all our engagements and experiences, in fact, fill our whole life with Thy presence. How pitiable is our plight, how absolutely forsaken we feel, when we do not realise Thy presence! A moment apart from Thee, a single occurrence detached from Thee, is worse than death; it is hell itself. Oh, do Thou fill us with the reality and the ecstasy of Thy presence, that our first thought at every turn may be of Thee and our whole destiny be shaped by Thy ordinance. Frail, erring, way-lost,

how can we help ourselves unless Thou dost cleanse, vivify, guide and sustain us and thus make Thy own living spirit the vital breath of our being? Lead us, be with us and encompass us as our All-in-all now and for ever. This is our humble supplication. Grant the response of Thy grace.

ASEESH.

The Lord of all truth reveal Himself unto us, cherish us, sanctify us and make us His own! Blessed be the name of the Lord!

Om ! Brahma Kripahi Kevalam !

Om ! Santhih ! Santhih ! Santhih !

Om ! Harih Om !

III

BIRTH-DAY FAMILY SERVICE.

(1926)

UDBODHANA.

Om ! Unto Him the *Paramatman*, the Supreme, Self-realised One, unto Him the *Kalyanamurthi*, the Lord of Love and Mercy, we render our humble obeisances and our reverent prostrations. His *karunyam*, His mercy measureless, His love abounding, who can gauge, who can estimate ? Every fibre of the body, every throb of the heart, every beat of the pulse, every twinkle of the star, every whisper of the breeze, every ripple of the brook, every lisp of innocence, every smile of affection, every embrace of love, every message of truth, every vision of glory—all, all proclaim His mercy and grace. Before Him we bow with the trust of faith, with the cheer of hope, with the warmth of love, with the joy of ecstasy. He is truly and verily present here and now, that we might adore Him, exalt and glorify Him, even for

* In Pithapuram Palace, on the 16th birth-day of the Yuvaraja (12-10-26).

our own salvation, our own sanctification. How gracious that the Supreme, Sovereign Lord of the universe should deign to descend into our homes and our hearts, reveal His presence to us, His humble adorers, and vouchsafe His grace even unto us, His erring suppliants ! His is the all-cherishing mercy ; and unto Him alone belongs the power to shape our destinies by guiding our steps in the path of truth and in the ways of goodness. From Him each one of us receives personal, individual gifts of the purest love and the richest graces. Blessed be His name that He has brought us together in this our own dear home, with the cheering and sanctifying purpose of adoring Him together as our beloved God. He is truly and verily the God of our home—its presiding Deity, its protecting Providence, its watchful Parent and its gracious Sanctifier. Thus to feel we are near Him, within His embrace, at His adorable feet, is even the rarest privilege He vouchsafes unto us. Blessed be His name !

As we worship Him now, may it be granted to us to realise how dear He holds each one of us and how intimately He addresses Himself to each one of us, gathering us all into a happy family and a joyful fraternity, unified into a brotherhood

of love, and yet requires us individually to testify that He is the personal Care-taker of each soul! The dear God of each and all, the Supreme Lord of the whole universe—even He is now and here, the God of our worship. Blessed be His name!

This blest opportunity of united worship is unto us, oh, Thou, dear God, a clear proof, a gladsome witness, of Thy love for each one of us. What are we, for what could we count, in the incomprehensible immensity of Thy creation, that Thou shouldst thus take thought of us and bestow on each one of us Thine own personal solicitude and protection? It all comes of Thy mercy—that mercy whose measure surpasses imagination, that mercy which is a ceaseless flow, in the richest fulness, of loving-kindness and fostering care, that mercy which ever takes direct and personal account of every need and want of ours, that mercy which is more than equal to every occurrence and every emergency, that mercy which works out Thy Divine purpose despite all seeming obstacles and apparent failures. It is this, Thy all-sufficing mercy, that is the richest treasure of life. It is Thy mercy that literally and manifestly tends and nourishes, purifies and uplifts, perfects and blesses, each one of us. This measureless mercy, whose

depth none can sound, whose vastness none can compass, whose height none can scale—this illimitable, inexhaustible mercy Thou Thyself art! It is not a gift *from* Thee. It is a self-donation *of* Thine own Holy Being unto each one of us. We shall not describe Thee; we may not name Thy qualities or attributes; we cannot dwell upon Thy vast and varied doings. It is enough for us, in humble and lowly faith, to know that Thy presence is never-failing, Thy providence never watchless, and Thy kindness never spent out. It is enough and more than enough for us to know that, awake or asleep, every moment of every life receives Thy immediate interest and engages Thy personal, parental attention. And to realise this that we are at all times actually on the lap of Thy love, is to be blessed beyond words. Thou, all-merciful God, the beloved One of our hearts, the revered One of our souls, the glorified One of our confessions, the adored One of our worship, blessed be Thy name!

ARADHANA.

HYMN—*O Nadha neegunamokaintha thelisina* (Telugu)

Thou art the *Nadha*, the Lord supreme, the Master unrivalled, and the Owner undivided, of our

hearts and our homes. And the entire purpose of our lives is to realise that our profit, our pleasure, our duty, our destiny, our strength, our success, all consist in owning Thee our Supreme Lord and rendering unto Thee the amplest and loyallest tribute of our adoration and service in a spirit of pure and deep love for Thee. Thou art manifest in a myriad forms ; but they all blend into the one glorious vision that Thou art the Supreme Lord, the Lord of lords, the *Nadhanadha*. Unto Thee alone, in the fullest measure, is due the loyalty and devotion of our hearts and souls. On this happy occasion, we feel specially invited, even by Thy Spirit, to realise this supreme privilege that Thou hast vouchsafed unto Thy children—to know and to accept Thee, not under the constraint of force, not out of the prudence of circumstance, not even from the prompting of gratitude, but even with the full, free reverence of our hearts, for their own satisfaction, for their own redemption. We render the whole guidance, the complete control, of our lives into Thy wise hands and proffer the tribute of our unreserved submission at Thy holy feet, as our own, our only *Nadha*. We beseech Thee to accept these gifts, poor and paltry in their own worth, but enriched with Thy love and blest

with Thy grace, even as we own Thee, proclaim Thee and glorify Thee as our own, our only *Nadha*.

HYMN—*Randu mana hruthpeelhamuna Brahmandanadhundu* (Telugu)

He the Brahmandanadha, He the Lord Supreme of the whole cosmic cycle of being, even He, in His unrivalled glory, in His matchless majesty, even He seeketh to be enthroned upon our human hearts. Thou Supreme One! How can we, how is it possible for us to, understand Thy marvellous yet merciful condescension thus to alight from Thy unapproachable majesty and inconceivable glory and seek entrance into our humble, lowly hearts? This is convincing evidence that in all Thy vast creation about us, the human heart is dear unto Thee as Thy favourite abode and the human soul is elected of Thee as Thy holiest shrine. And how can we receive this incoming Holy Spirit with our countless blemishes, impurities and deformities? Is it given unto us, can we hope, to receive Thee and enthrone Thee as the Lord of our hearts.? Yes; it is vouchsafed even unto *me*, the vilest of sinners, thus to instal Thee on the heart, be it ever so stained and contaminated with the vilest of sins. Thou art not a God to condemn and reject; but Thou are the God to cleanse and brighten, to

revive and restore, to forgive and re-embrace. Thou comest uninvited; Thou abidest with the intense eagerness of personal solicitude; and thus Thou fulfillest Thy purpose in the heart and the soul of every one of Thy children. Immaculate and resplendent in Thyself, yet tenderly clement towards Thy creatures, Thou makest us pure and winnest us unto Thee. In this reunion—the recall and the return—we find in Thee our Lord Supreme, our Spouse Divine; and we receive Thee, embrace Thee and prostrate ourselves before Thee. Be with us; abide with us; make us so completely Thine that there may remain not the slightest, faintest vestige of what we, in our dark ignorance and sad folly, call ‘I’ and ‘Mine’. We would surrender our all unto Thee. We would venture, with a trembling yet trustful spirit, to tender at Thy throne the humble yet, in Thy sight, welcome offerings of our minds and hearts all their ideas, desires, hopes, expectations, aims, aspirations, vows and prayers. Do Thou consecrate them with the sanctity of Thy holy spirit! Thus dedicated unto Thee, we would adore Thee as the Lord of our hearts, enthroned there for ever to reign with the absolute right and the perfect control of love and righteousness. Blessed be Thy name now and for ever!

HYMN—*Koniyada tharamey ninnu, kuvalayavinutha*
(Telugu)

It were vain, all too vain, to pretend to know the fulness of Thy being ; and idle, still more idle, it were to seek adequately to praise Thee in Thy grandeur. Yet Thou, gracious God, it comes of Thine own prompting, time and again—this desire in our hearts to praise Thee and to glorify Thee, be it ever so feebly, ever so humbly, as the eyes are feasted and the heart is transported with the glorious expression around us and within us of Thy wisdom and Thy goodness, Thy holiness and Thy loveliness. Our sight dim, our spirit lowly, we dare not look up and say, ‘ Behold, here is His greatness ’. Yet, even to our weak vision and frail faith Thou hast disclosed enough of that grandeur of Thy Divine Self—Thy majesty, wisdom, goodness and beauty, that it alternately startles and cheers us—at one time amazes us and at another delights us. As we are granted, through Thy grace, a clearer vision, a keener insight, a fuller faith and a deeper trust, Thou dost make Thyself manifest, beyond all mistake and above all misgiving, as the wonderful, the marvellous God—mysterious while we only groped after Thee and miraculous as we come to glimpse Thee. Thou art the God of myriad miracles worked not

only over the vast domain of the world without but also in the secret shrine of the spirit within—miracles of the daily, hourly, aye, momentary manifestations of wisdom, goodness and grace. Thou, dear God! We experience a thrill of awe as we behold this unending panorama of wonderful, marvellous, miraculous manifestations of Thy own holy spirit. Who counts the days, who numbers the stars, who regulates the order, who replenishes the vitality, who guides the courses, who unfolds the purposes, who shapes the destinies, who fulfils the ends of this vast creation but Thine own glorious, gracious self? 'Taking in the 'all' yet never missing the 'each', pervading the whole with one grand purpose yet directing each after its own bent or talent, how Thou workest out Thy providence throughout the immensity of Thy Creation, here orb careering with orb through the vast firmament and there animalcule rejoicing with animalcule in the tiny water-drop, again the pollen of every glebe-born flower fleeting about as a mundane breath of the fragrance of Heaven! Thou art truly the God of greatness, the God of wisdom, the God of goodness, the God of love, the God of beauty, the God of holiness, the God of bliss! And who can proclaim, who can praise, Thy marvellous,

miraculous purposes except the feeling, throbbing heart, the longing, yearning heart, the heart that hungers with passionate love for Thee, the heart that would curse itself as widowed without Thee, the heart that would writhe with unutterable anguish if divorced from Thee? Oh, Thou compassionate God, put into us, we beseech Thee, that heart of trust, that heart of love, that heart of consecrated devotion, that heart of self-surrendering renunciation. Then alone we shall live to some little purpose. Then alone we shall prove ourselves faithful in our stewardship. Then alone we shall feel blessed enough to rejoice that we are of God, that we are in God, and that God deigns to manifest Himself in us. Grant us, we implore Thee, this supreme blessing and reveal Thyself as the eternally blessed in us and through us.

HYMN—*Yemani pilathunu ninnu ney nemani
pilathunu ninnu* (Telugu)

Thou, the Nameless One of numberless names! How shall we name Thee? How shall we address Thee? Our hearts long to hail Thee and receive Thee in Thy myriad aspects and expressions, as Thou, in Thine infinite mercy and sovereign condescension, revealest Thyself in a ceaseless succession of the expressions and manifestations of

Thine own self in tune with the adoring spirit's need or mood. We feel the need of a protector; and we call Thee the supreme, ever-vigilant Protector of our lives. We long for a beloved one; and we welcome Thee as the sole, unrivalled Charmer of our hearts. Left alone in this amazingly extensive creation, we require company; and Thou standest by as our unfailing Companion. Yearning for the protection of a parent, we find in Thee at once our Father and our Mother. And as the heart desires an object for attachment and affection, Thou manifestest Thyself in the Child. Seeking truth, we find in Thee the infallible Teacher. And dedicated to service; we have Thee as the all-sustaining Strength. Aye, of the whole host of our longings and desires, Thou art the satisfaction, Thou art the fulfilment. For this Thy all-sufficing and all-satisfying benignity we render our whole-hearted thanks unto Thee.

DHANYAVADASAMARPANAMU and PRARDHANA.

On this dear day, this happy auspicious occasion, we would specially receive Thee, praise Thee and adore Thee as our dear God, the God of our home and family. We remember and report, acknowledge and proclaim, how Thou hast been merciful unto us beyond the power of words.

This is a day of special acknowledgment of Thy goodness unto us. As Thou tellest out day after day and countest up year after year, Time marks only the process of the self-manifestations of Thy spirit, the successive presentations of the treasures of Thy mercy and Thy grace. With our spiritual perceptions brightened by Thy illumination, we value this day as a day of special thanksgiving unto Thee that our dear one, the object of our care, the centre of our hopes, the focus of all our humble yet eager endeavours, has, through Thine infinite mercy, reached that stage where from the innocence of childhood and the buoyancy of boyhood he passes into the vigour and the restraint, the hope and the discipline, of youth. These sixteen years, Thou hast kept watch and ward over him and extended security and protection to him. Circled with benedictions, shielded from malediction, he has grown, under our eyes, a tender bud wearing ever new colours, unfolding ever-increasing charms and disclosing ever-augmented promises. For all this we render our whole-hearted thanks unto Thee. Among the facilities for his growth, what is there, is there anything whatsoever, that we can claim as our share? None; absolutely none. Ours is but to turn to Thee and submit, 'Thou hast sent this

dear one unto us. Do Thou also vouchsafe that he grows into Thy faithful servant and loving son, and sustains all that is good and pure and lovely in the traditions of this ancient House.' Exceeding, beyond measure, the appeals of our hearts has been the abundance of Thy mercy vouchsafed unto us through this darling. Thy free, unexpected, unanticipated, even unsolicited mercies, we are gathered here today, with grateful hearts and reverent souls, to own. Do Thou deign to accept these, our meagre offerings of thankfulness and gratitude. In Thy own profoundly impressive manner, do Thou render him, over again, dear to us; and do Thou teach us the supreme, saving lesson that we should repose trust in Thee through the darkest day and in the gloomiest hour and say, 'God, Thou art ever with us and, therefore, we cannot but be always Thine!' Thou hast passed him out of boyhood into youth through the portals of serious illness. We wept and sobbed; we missed Thy presence and felt deserted; we turned against Thee and called Thee the faithless and forgetting God. But when didst Thou forget or desert a single creature of Thine? Thou ever-present God, ever-cherishing God, Thou didst once again calm and cheer our hearts by ushering in Thy inextinguishable light with renewed blessing. And, while we

receive him over again at Thy merciful and loving hands as Thy precious gift, may we appraise the full value of the gift and hold it dear to our hearts as Thy gift! Teach us to consecrate our life-energy as unto Thy gift in him. And do Thou Thyself strengthen his body, train his mind, refine his conscience, sweeten his heart, nerve his will, and sanctify his soul, and thus render him worthy of all that Thou hast, in Thy wisdom and grace, designed for him. As, for Thy sake, he is dear unto us, so we render him, again and again, unto Thee. We beseech Thee, do Thou light his path, guide his steps, keep him pure and wise and good, as becoming the scion of a noble family, and sustain his strength and steady his purpose in life to serve Thee. This is our humble prayer; do Thou mercifully vouchsafe it. And these dear ones that have come in his wake, may they, likewise, grow from strength to strength, from grace to grace, our imperfections not hindering them, our faults not injuring them, in the least! By Thee and Thee alone has adversity been blown away, hostility overcome, truth upheld, goodness vindicated and righteousness rendered regnant even before our eyes. And, oh Thou All-merciful God, as Thou art mercy itself and infusest stintless sympathy into us, shall we not, with that God-granted sympathy,

remember and share in the privations and afflictions of others—the acute suffering of sickness and the harrowing anguish of bereavement? Likewise, shall not our hearts bound with joy over the beloved offspring of all other hearts, their cherished nurslings, that will, under Thy tending, grow into a golden harvest of the spirit to enrich our souls? May our hearts learn to receive and rejoice in them all as the countless lotus-buds in the *manasasarovaram* of Thy love! Above all, do Thou teach our souls to place implicit trust in Thy ordinances: clouds float in and clouds drift away, but the stars burn and the sun shines in quenchless radiance; breezes blow and thunders burst, but the calm survives them all. Likewise, trials may come—sickness may afflict, troubles may threaten, and the entire prospect of life may prove bewildering; yet, oh Thou saving God, may renewed mercy, revived love, rejuvenated hope reassure us that Thy sovereign grace endureth, to be trusted, for ever! Yes; as we believe, so do we grow in wisdom; as we trust, so are we reinforced with the strength to pray, ‘Thy will be done!’ And there is, in imperishable truth, no God but Thee, Thine own holy self, to trust and adore; no parent to seek protection from but Thee; no companion to lean on but Thee, oh Thou Eternal

Goodness! So may the whole orb of creation be bound with chains of love to Thy holy feet!

Nor may we forget how the richest gifts of mercy were ours on the auspicious day of the first advent of these dear ones of the vaster family here assembled through Thy blessing—dear ones whom others pronounce parentless but whom Thou hast taught us to receive and embrace as Thy children! We recall, with deep gratitude, the blessed hour when the first ones were welcomed, whom the rest have joined, one after one, in course of time—to form really and richly a feast unto the eye and an elixir unto the heart. And as they grow and go forth as off-shoots of the parent stock, may Thy blessing go with them and guide them on the path of life! Thus, may Thy Divine glory be blessed and acclaimed everywhere; and may Thy Kingdom of truth, goodness and grace be established in our hearts and homes! Blessed, blessed, blessed be Thy name now and for ever!

Om! Brahma Kripahi Kevalam!

Om! Santhih! Santhih! Santhih!

Om! Harih Om!!

IV
MARRIAGE * SERVICE.
(1929)

HYMNS—*Anandalokey (Bengali) ; Anandamritanamah*
(Sanskrit)

UDBODHANA.

Om ! Parabrahmaney namah ! Om ! Anandamritanamah ! Unto the Supreme One, the Eternal Source and Spring of life immortal and bliss celestial, unto Him we render reverent and adoring obeisances on this thrice - happy occasion of *kalyanam*, auspiciousness itself. And we bless and praise His hallowed and blissful name that He has vouchsafed unto us all the joy, pure and deep, of witnessing this solemn union of two hearts, of twin spirits. It is a thrice-blessed hour when, moved by the most genuine sentiments of good-will and fraternity, we are gathered here, in such large numbers, to witness and rejoice over this holy wedlock of two souls. It is not merely a festive function. It is an inspiring sacrament, holy with

* Of Sreeman Binaya Bhushan Rakshit, M.A., and Sreemati Sneha Sobhana Devi, B.A., L.T., in the Brahmopasana Mandir, Cocanada (7-1-1929).

the holiness that is imparted and infused by the All-holy God. If there be any occasion when peace and good-will, joy and benediction, are harmoniously attuned into one surging, swelling anthem of praise and glorification unto God, it is this thrice-blessed hour of the espousal of two love-laden and trust-possessed souls. May He, the Maker of all true and joyful marriages, now fill the hearts of us all with the solemn sense and the glad sentiment befitting this happy and holy ceremony! And may He, first and foremost, so inspire and so sanctify the hearts and souls of these two dear ones who are come here, with hope looking forward and joy bracing around, to render and surrender each unto the other as co-pilgrims and as eternally-wedded spirits to fulfil the purpose of life and glorify the Creator, Protector and Saviour of all with the daily and hourly homage and offering of worship and service! May He inspire them with the noblest of aspirations and enrich them with the sweetest of attachments that they shall feel here and hereafter inseparably and everlastingly one! The Lord God, who is the Eternal Witness of every vow and every covenant He is here present in the majesty and glory and in the beauty and holiness of supreme perfection ;

and He reveals Himself here as the unifying Devotion, the gladdening Benediction, the guiding Inspiration and the sanctifying Grace. May we feel the thrill of the certainty, of the invigoration and the exhilaration, of His holy presence; and with Him as the presiding Priest and the attesting Witness, solemnise, even under His holy auspices, this thrice-happy ceremony, by participating in the prayers, the hopes and the joys of the two endearing souls that yearn to be 'wed in the Eternal' ! The Lord God of all mercy and grace now pronounce the benediction and reveal His Holy Spirit as the enshrined sanctity in the hearts of these two, unto the great joy of us all !

VARANAMU.

(To the Bridegroom)

My brother, Sreeman Binaya Bhushan Rakshit, have you come here moved by the Holy Spirit of God and cherishing the purest love and the deepest devotion towards her whom you desire to make the better—the finer and purer—half of your own self? Have you come here with God as the witness and love and devotion as the motive to be thus united to her ?

(Bridegroom—‘ Yes ’)

The Lord God of all truth, love and righteousness for ever bless and cherish! you with His richest gifts of grace !

(To the Bride)

My sister, Sreemati Sneha Sobhana! Devi, have you come here, moved by the Holy Spirit of God and cherishing the purest love and the deepest devotion towards him whom you have elected to accept as the bracing strength and the companioning joy in the sacred pilgrimage of life, to be united to him in holy wedlock ?

(The Bride—‘ Yes ’)

The Lord God of all truth, love and righteousness for ever bless and cherish you with His richest gifts of grace !

PRARDHANA.

Thou art the eternal witness. Thou art the prime source, the perennial spring, the ceaseless stream of life and love. It is from Thee, as the Author of all life and the Emanator of all love, that we come into being and both receive and render the great blessings of life and love. Unto Thee wholly and absolutely is due the praise and

glorification both for giving to each soul its divine genesis in Thee and for initiating each being into this world-wide temple of creation; and before Thy throne of glory we humbly and reverently render the homage of self-dedicating love and self-surrendering service. And in achieving this noble object of human existence, as the Heaven-ordained fulfilment of a holy purpose, Thou dost design the unification, the interfusion, of heart with heart and soul with soul in the manifold relations of life; and Thou dost establish, to be Thy tabernacles, homesteads and families that therein Thy purest light of love and holiness might shine in all the effulgence of truth and all the radiance of righteousness. It is this sanctifying purpose and design of Thine that has prompted these two children of Thy Holy Spirit to reach forth to each other, that, in thus gifting themselves, they should gain the end of life, as with united hearts and wedded souls they render unto Thee the worship of their conjoint existence. For us it is a sure fact that of Thine own making is this marriage to be now solemnised. Solemnity, Sanctity, Beatitude—these are the fruit as well as the germ of all holy union—a union springing from pure love, growing in selfless devotion and ripening into ecstatic happiness. These, Thy children, as all others likewise united and blessed, are intended

and designed to glorify Thee in their confluent lives. Do Thou extend the maternal hand of Thy holy benediction and bless each of them and bless the two together on this happy and holy occasion! Thou hast designed them, even in the depth of Thy wisdom and in the plentitude of Thy mercy, to be joint custodians and conjoint trustees of the 'now' and the 'hereafter.' We invoke Thy Holy Spirit to descend into their hearts and be enshrined in their souls that thus their happy and holy union be the intertwining of two souls into one life in love and service. 'Thou alone knowest the deep meaning, the great significance, the rich promise and the profound potentialities implied and comprehended in the holy sacrament of wedlock. It is Thy Holy Spirit alone that can and does transform the wavering inclination of the mortal into the steadfast faith of the immortal. Do Thou grant unto these, Thy two children, those rich gifts of truth, purity, love and grace that make the marriage bond divine—both sacred and ecstatic. May they feel the deep sanctity and enjoy the ample felicity of this sacred union! And in that sweet home, made secure and serene by their faith and love, may there, for ever, abide the unflinching fidelity, the immaculate love, the radiant righteousness, the heavenly joy that Thou dost benignantly vouchsafe unto every

couple unswervingly loyal to the covenant of love and devotion as now to be made in Thy holy presence with this large concourse of Thy children as the attesting fraternity of well-wishers! Bless them and make them for the generations to come patterns of purity and exemplars of love that, thus gifted by Thy grace, they may rear and enjoy the richest fruit of a God-dedicated life! Blessed, blessed, blessed be Thy name now and for ever!

PANIGRAHANAMU.

HYMN—*Dhanyadeva Poornabrahma Praneswara*
Deenabandhu (Bengali)

(To the Bride and the Bridegroom)

Now you have heard, not merely from human voice but from the holy oracle of the Divine Spirit that is in every bosom, those two sanctifying words—‘Love’ and ‘Devotion.’ And as the hymn has stated, you are meant to be unto each other the *prananadha* and the *prananayaki*. And as, even with my faltering voice and feeble arms, I am privileged thus to unite your hands in token of the union of your hearts, I ask and exhort you to realise vividly and devoutly that you are now, in the presence of our holy God, pledged to be true in every word you utter and prayerfully and unflinchingly to adhere to the vow you now take.

(To the Bridegroom)

My brother, Sreeman Binaya Bhushan Rakshit, you, please, say after me: 'I, Binaya Bhushan Rakshit, request you, Sreemati Sneha Sobhana Devi, to accept my heart in holy union. And I solemnly promise you, in the presence of the All-holy God, that, through time and eternity, I will be true, loyal, loving and devoted to you with all my heart and soul, in joy and in grief, in prosperity and in adversity, in health and in sickness, through good report and evil. I pledge my heart to you, and I request you to gift your heart to me. May the Lord God confirm and bless this covenant on my part!'

(To the Bride)

My sister, Sreemati Sneha Sobhana Devi, please say after me: 'I, Sneha Sobhana Devi, request you, Sreeman Binaya Bhushan Rakshit, to receive my heart and to gift your heart to me in holy union. Before the all-witnessing, all-sanctifying God, I promise and avow that, through time and eternity, I will be sincerely and lovingly attached to you in joy and in grief, in prosperity and in adversity, in health and in sickness, in the good day and in the bad day, and will always

devote myself to the pursuit of our united prosperity and happiness. As I gift my heart to you, I request and receive your loving heart as mine. May God, the Unifier of all hearts, bless this covenant with truth, love and righteousness ! ’

(Bride and Bridegroom together)

‘ May the Lord God unite our hearts and wed our souls, through time and eternity, in truth, love, devotion and righteousness, unto His glory and the good of His children and our united peace and happiness ! ’

The Lord of all truth, love and righteousness bless this covenant with His grace and make this holy union of the two hearts fruitful of all the goodness and all the happiness that human hearts and souls can receive and render back ! It is permitted even to me, great sinner though I be, to pronounce the benediction of peace, love and joy upon these two dear ones, on this solemn occasion, in the name of the All-gracious God.

ANGULEEYAVINIMAYAMU.

(The Bridegroom to the Bride)

‘ With this ring placed upon your lovely finger, I give and receive pure love. May this ring be

the witness, every hour and every minute, to our covenant to be for ever united in truth, love and joy! God bless this sacred token!’

(The Bride to the Bridegroom)

‘With this ring, as I place it on your dear finger, I enter into the holiest covenant of love and devotion with you. May God, the eternal Witness of all holy vows, bless this sacred token with His richest blessings of truth, purity and righteousness!’

These two hearts are thus devoted unto each other, as witnessed by these sacred symbols. May they grow together for ever in the happiness of peace, love and righteousness, as by these tokens each one has unreservedly gifted himself or herself to the other! God bless this holy union!

THILAKAVINYASAMU.

This national and widely-cherished mark of pure matronhood—the *thilakam*—the Bridegroom now places, with the purest love and heartiest affection, on the beaming forehead of the Bride.

(To the Bride)

May it shine as the star of love and bloom as the rose of purity on thy radiant forehead, all thy days, through the sanctifying benediction of Him

who has, on this solemn occasion, translated thee from the maiden to the matron !

HARAVINIMAYAMU.

The Couple exchange garlands of fragrant flowers.

HYMN—*Emani pilathunu ninnu* (Telugu)

UPADESAMU.

My sister and my brother, I esteem it a great privilege that I have been invited to the glad function of ministering on this occasion, this very solemn and happy occasion, of the celebration of your holy wedlock.

(Disturbing noises from a part of the assembly)

My friends, I hope I shall not be touching the jarring chord in your system when I remark that plain, simple fellow-feeling ought to enjoin on every one of us here the elementary duty of observing befitting solemnity on an occasion like this. If some there are present to whose hearts the sacrament does not make the right appeal, will they, for the sake of common decency, be good enough not to disturb those who do feel solemnly moved by it ? I believe that unto all Indians, and especially the Hindus, the sacrament of marriage is of divine significance. And if some of us do not catch the

true spirit of it, then, for every one of us here it is but common charity, at least, to allow others to cherish the right spirit. I do trust my appeal will have the desired and requested effect.

I was observing that I valued it as a great privilege to be invited here to minister at the holy wedlock of these two youthful, trustful, hopeful souls. And in the circumstances as they exist in the present instance, there is full warrant for the hope and the belief that, by God's grace, this should prove a supremely happy union, abundantly fruitful of conjugal devotion and fidelity, domestic peace and happiness, family regard and affection, and general welfare and advancement. Gifted with culture, character and piety as this happy couple is, we may hopefully turn and pray to God that, as He has Himself designed this union, so He, may in His boundless mercy, make it the seed-plot for an abundant harvest of all that is true and pure, good and lovely.

Great are the responsibilities, my sister and my brother, of the *grihastha*, the house-holder. There is a conjoint and reciprocal duty that has to be most faithfully accepted and most sedulously discharged. Not the thinnest mist of suspicion, not the faintest speck of doubt or distrust, should ever

be suffered to pass across the radiance of your conjugal life. Pure love is the bond and simple trust the title-deed unto the integrity of this pledge and covenant. You yourselves know—and I, therefore, merely remind you of what is quite plain to you, when I observe—that, after this union, for you, my brother, there is only one female, and for you, my sister, there is only one male, in the whole world; all others stand as fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters, sons and daughters—kindred in God-ordained and God-sanctified family life. Unto you, my brother, all the wealth of grace and charm has come to be treasured up in her. And, again, unto you, my sister, all the winsome attractiveness of strength and agility, manliness and handsomeness, has come to be mirrored in him. Each shall be the lode-star of loveliness unto the other. The two shall be like those twin-stars that revolve round one central focus. Never, even in the most absent-minded moment, shall it be permissible for you hereafter to think in terms of the single unit. As the poet-sage has it, in the arithmetic of life the recognised unit comprises the husband and the wife together. A two-celled heart beating with one love, you are, not by man's covenant, but by God's command, for ever inseparably united—realising what in

Persian is named *hamdardi*, not merely sharing and participating, but personally and intimately sensing and feeling, experiencing and enjoying, as in intertwined reciprocity, one confluent life of love and service, of worship and duty. That is the great responsibility now reposed on you conjointly.

Open every day with the reciprocal covenant of conjugal unity ; close every day with united thankfulness for conjugal faith and hope. And be your home, as it is designed to be, the abode of peace and happiness. Guests will enter it in the name of God, not as strangers to sojourn, but as sisters and brothers returning home. Kith and kin will have a claim upon you, not through your generosity, but through self-realising service in your own behalf. The community to which you belong will claim (and, I dare say, will receive) its full due of confidence and co-operation. The country, dear unto us all, will demand from you all the devotion, love and service that the mother has, by a divine right, the prerogative to receive from the child. Humanity, of which we all are part and parcel, will reach out to you fellow-feelings and good-wishes and draw out from you all the homage of absorption due from the part to the

whole. And God, the great Unifier of souls, He claims you all for His own; He intends and directs that you shall, with folded hands, bowed heads, dedicated hearts and adoring souls, glorify Him through wise resolutions, well-bestowed energies, thoughtful activities, self-abnegating services. To Him belongs the worship of your hearts; and to Him is, likewise, due the homage of your bodies. May you fulfil the purpose of life through your sanctified union in devotion and duty! And as you advance in co-pilgrimage along the Heaven-prescribed path of love and service, may to you be vouchsafed the richest blessings of truth and love, peace and happiness! Blessed, blessed, blessed be the hallowed name of our God!

SAPTHAPADI.

Now, my sister and my brother, I suggest and request that, as impressively symbolic of your united life in the great future before you, you now take seven solemn steps together, to realise your conjugal oneness. Hand clasping hand, with trust in God and devotion to His Holy Spirit, you take together the first step of loyal adherence to Truth; you take together the second step of resolute pursuit of Duty; you take together the third step of affectionate devotion

to the claims of Parentage and Family ; you take together the fourth step of willing acceptance of the demands of Fraternity and Community ; you take together the fifth step of tireless service rendered to the Mother-country ; you take together the sixth step of the resolve to subserve the lofty aims of Humanity ; finally, you take together the seventh step, the culminating step, the crowning step, of soul-deep devotion to the Deity. The Lord God of grace abounding lead you together in this endless pilgrimage as joint worshippers, devotees and servants, all the days of your lives ! His richest blessings be with you, now and for ever !

SADASYAPRANAMAMU.

(The Bride and the Bridegroom offer reverent salutations to the assembly)

Brothers and sisters, I beseech you all to receive the salutations of these dear ones and grant to them your benedictions in the name of our holy God and His humanity.

ASEESH.

May the Lord of all truth for ever lead them ; the Lord of all love for ever cherish them ; the Lord of all holiness for ever sanctify them ; and the Lord of all happiness for ever bless them ! May their

united lives, as they grow in love, be dedicated to the worship of God and the service of Humanity ! Blessed, blessed, blessed be the name of our God now and for ever !

Om ! Brahma Kripahi Kevalam !

Om ! Santhih ! Santhih ! Santhih !

Om ! Harih Om !

V

BIRTH-DAY FAMILY SERVICE

(1929)

UDBODHANA.

Unto the Supreme and All-perfect Lord, we render our reverent obeisances. Unto the All-clement Deity, we tender our profoundly grateful salutations. Unto the All-creating and All-fostering Father, we proffer our souls' richest love. He is in Himself supreme, transcending all bounds of time and space. But He is mercy and tenderness itself towards His children. Out of His infinite affection He brings all into being ; and not only does He vouchsafe life—an ever-progressive, increasingly enriched existence—unto us but, with the intimate solicitude and personal attachment of the parent, He keeps with us and for ever cherishes us. Our hearts' richest tribute of affection and devotion we offer to Him with the irrepressibly yearning and rejoicing souls of children. How He proves Himself, through the numberless witnesses

* In Pithapuram Palace, on the 16th birth-day of the Second Maharajah-kumar (26-10-'29).

of creation, that His is a love that is simply limitless and that, through every nerve and fibre of our physical frame, He pours in abundantly and ceaselessly the nectar of His parental love! How very poor, how utterly helpless, all human language shows itself when we feebly attempt to relieve the urgency of the heart by very humbly yet most ardently seeking to give grateful expression to our sense of the besetting, enrapturing presence of our dear God! Is there aught so stale, so secular, as not to tell us of the living presence of our God? The soft dust and the tender grass that we heedlessly trample under our feet—they tell us that the loving, fostering Mother makes the path of life smooth and joyous. The stars are not set up merely to marshall His glory. They are there fixed in the canopy of the sky to beam upon us as the smile of the Divine Mother. The warmth in the body, receiving not merely the comfort but the joy of refreshing breezes—that is a testimony unto the life-generating and joy-creating God. The whole process of creation—what is it but the unfolding, in ever-increasing vastness and richness, of the treasure of His love? Every sense, so familiar and therefore so neglected, is a golden gate, a heaven-designed portal, for conveying into

our very hearts the message of His mercy. On this dear occasion, if we did not rejoice to worship Him and find our purest and intensest pleasure in adoring and praising and glorifying Him, how pitiably barren, how lamentably low, how miserably and even culpably wasted, our lives should be! As even a single moment in the soul's contemplation of the Lord discloses His majesty, so every breath of life brings home His love. Oh, the ecstasy, the heavenly bliss, of this experience! Who has not felt the mercy and the love of God even in these sacred and sanctifying visitations of the Holy Spirit? God declines, simply refuses, to treat us, deal with us, as mere creatures of the flesh and the earth. We are His darling children in His embrace, for ever under the eye of the watchful, careful, solicitous providence of our own God. And how blessed, exalted, truly sanctified, nay, in the veriest sense of it, transfigured into the children of God, His own offspring, the darlings of His love, the beloved ones of His Spirit, we are reared to become, through this holy communion with our dear God in worship! We are here once again by His mercy and through His own design. We are here once again within a week to rejoice in the Lord, to render our hearts' exulting praise and glory unto our Divine Parent and thus to rejoice

in one another as His children, members of His family, sisters and brothers of the fraternity that owns Him as its revered Parent. All the wealth of the world is light and stale as dust in the scale against this supreme joy. Life translated into immortality, love glorified into the felt and enjoyed companionship of God, the whole frame athrill with the vivifying and sanctifying touch of the Deity, we are here on holy ground, in His very temple. We embrace Him with our hearts; we adore Him with our souls. Our dear, dear God is thus truly our own God—our Parent, Friend, Protector, Saviour and Sanctifier. Unto Him we render our most reverent salutations on this occasion. Blessed be His name !

ARADHANA.

*Om Satyam Jnanamanantam Brahma Anandaroopamamritam Yadvibhati Santam Sivamadvaitam
Suddhamapapaviddhan !*

Truth is Thine own self. Wisdom is Thine own self-realisation. Infinity is Thine own self-possession. Thou art the Transcendent God, surpassing the limits of our thought and imagination, for ever dwelling, abiding, in Thyself as Truth that is the Substance, as Wisdom that is the Light, as Infinity

that is the Abode, of all. Thus Thou surpassest and transcendest us. Yet with that link of kinship between Thee and the spirits of Thy creating, Thou dost vouchsafe to them, the tiny molecules of this world, a joyous glimpse, a transfiguring vision, of Thy Supreme Self. And, self-contained and self-sufficient, Thou declinest to be self-satisfied; and Thou reachest Thyself forth, mirrored and manifest in myriad forms and shapes, proclaiming and portraying Thyself in swelling and surging *anandam* and in quenchless *amritam*. Thus Thou manifestest Thyself; and then we seek, not only to glimpse Thee, but truly to receive Thee into our souls. Thou manifest God, Thou incarnate Mercy, we are united with Thee in joyousness, *anandam*, and in ever-abounding life, *amritam*, as Thou unfoldest Thyself throughout the ages. And as Thou comest forth to make Thyself known and achievest Thy purpose of creation in the countless manifestations of Thy love, we feel the peace that passeth all understanding, the peace of the loving and eternal God, infused for ever, in sublime tranquility, into the hearts of men and women. And with peace come the harmony and the rapture of brothers; and *santham* is perfected into *sivam*; and then, once again, having flowed out of Thee, we flow back unto Thee in the amplified and enriched unity

of truth, goodness, beauty and ecstasy. And we endure through time and beyond time, through timeless eternity, in Thee as *Suddhamapapaviddham*, the pure, immaculate, resplendent glory of Righteousness. Thus, from eternity to eternity, the full process of life in time and space, budding and blooming, fragrant and fruitful, is gathered into the sanctuary of Thy Holy Spirit. Again, we grow into Thee, as we realise unto ourselves that this grand, glorious vision of the world is truly the Deity's delight, the *leela* of the Loving Lord, in living hearts for ever rejoicing in Thee. For this wonderful gospel of Thy love and grace, we render our whole-hearted thanks unto Thee. Blessed be Thy name now and for ever !

DHYANAMU.

CONGREGATIONAL CHANT—*Om ! Namasthey
Sathethey etc.*

Launched on this profound main of the world, we turn to Thee and say Thou art our Pilot, Thine the firm hand upon the helm and Thine the steady eye guiding the little bark of each life towards its heaven of divine childship and companionship. Thus we own and acknowledge Thee as our *Bhavambodhipotham*. We seek refuge in Thee,

cast ourselves with all the trust of children on Thy care and protection. And needing nothing but Thee and finding our life's purpose all centred in Thee, we pray unto Thee in the imperishable words shared by saint and sinner, by the wise and the ignorant. We disclose unto Thee the wishes and desires of our hearts, as we supplicate Thee in the age-long yet ever-new prayer. *Asathoma-Sadgamaya, Thamasoma Jyothirgamaya, Mrithyoramrithamgamaya*: Lead us out of untruth into truth; guide us out of darkness into light; carry us out of the death of self into immortal life in Thee. Oh, Thou self-revealing One, do Thou reveal Thyself unto us; Thou awe-inspiring One, with the benignity of Thy Divine smile do Thou protect and cherish us for ever. Blessed be Thy name now and for ever !

DHANYAVADASAMARPANAMU.

HYMN—*Antayu Needaya* (Telugu)

All this is 'Thine own mercy made manifest unto our poor, narrow understanding. Not only dost Thou provide, unasked, even for all the unforeseen needs and wants of our lives but, with the eager interest of the loving mother, Thou dost apply Thyself to the task of nursing and cherishing

each one of us. Custom, fossil-custom, encrusting the mind's perception, atrophying the heart's feeling and eclipsing the soul's vision, conceals Thee from us. And we turn here and turn there and delude ourselves to think that these countless gifts of life have come to us unknown of Thee, unprovided by Thee. The sun brings the light; the rivers convey the waters; the breezes blow refreshingly; the hard earth endures and upholds; the stars shine and serve; life begins, expands and apparently terminates; families are formed; tribes are gathered; the parents foster; the teachers enlighten; the friends help; the spouse and the child love. Thus we surround ourselves with these creatures of Thine, these little off-shoots of the world's existence; and we forget Thee! If only we kept the soul's eye open, we would, to our wonder, delight and sanctification, see how Thou art present with, in and around all these possessions of life. The whole course of being has been mapped out by Thee. All efforts and endeavours, all paths to progress, all facilities for self-development and service—all are of Thine own ordering. Not merely in the larger concerns of the world's destiny but in the minutest details of each life art Thou present. Were we only gifted with a child's heart, should we not see Thee seated

affectionately at every meal that goes to feed the body and, through the physical frame, help also to sustain the non-physical faculties and powers? The servant purchases; the cook prepares; I eat: Here is a bald and soulless interpretation of what is, in truth, Thy daily and hourly ministering, with a motherly hand, unto the needs of my physical self!. Literally, indubitably, Thy hand lifteth unto the mouth of each child every morsel of food that goes to sustain and enrich life. The drink sipped in is the Mother's nectared love. The sleep that refreshes is repose on the Mother's lap. What is the darkness of the night but the drawing closer of the Mother that the child may be alone with Her in the sweet slumbers out of which the child shall bound back into refreshed life by day-break? The alternations of day and night, the processions of seasons and years, are Thine own providential doings for the weal, the joy and the sanctity of Thy children. If every minute of the longest life were spent in numbering out these gifts of Thine, how poor would be the little count as against the inexhaustible stores of Thy mercy! Yet our joy, our eternal happiness, is that we should be awakened to own and accept with bounding hearts the truth of Thy personal attention unto, and protection of, each one of us.

Father and mother, wife and child, servant and helpmate, he who doctors and they who cheer, all who instruct and expand our faculties to get into tune with the majestic melody of the stars—all, all are the miracles and marvels of Thy mercy. We render our whole-hearted thanks unto Thee. Open out the ever-expanding vista of Thy vision that life may be an unbroken, ever-deepening sacrament and the whole existence one happy, holy pilgrimage from heights of glory to higher heights of beatitude, ever serving to enfold us in the embrace of the benign Mother.

On this occasion, we would remember Thee for Thy mercies unto our home. If only we had the grace of soul to pause and understand Thy bounties of mercy as disclosed in this family, what further proof of Thy love would we need or ask for? Thou hast now and here written out with Thy heavenly hand one impressive chapter of that all-inclusive, ever-expanding gospel of grace within the living memories of the annals of this House. We desire, and we beseech Thee, to address our thoughts and attune our souls to this joyous contemplation of Thy gracious self-revelation in and through the occurrences and opportunities of this home. How can we render adequate thanks for

all that Thou hast marvellously disclosed of Thy heavenly mercy through him whom Thou hast set up as the father of the family? Himself deserted at a tender age by those who should have fostered him, Thou didst take him up and say, 'This is My child'; and Thou hast reared him into the model of a care-taking heart unto forlorn children. We praise and glorify Thee for this mercy; and we implore Thee to make him more and more worthy of Thy dispensation of love, permeated with Thy spirit of love, that so he may evermore stand out as a witness unto Thy grace and goodness. And how Thou didst bring unto him the honoured, beloved queen of the family so tenderly realising in reverent humility the true *maharani* in herself! And around the care-taking father and the fostering mother has grown a family not only of six but several times six. Cast away from the world, how many children have come to their bosom! We rejoice with them on this happy score. In the closer and nearer circle, these six darlings, how Thou hast grown them, nourished them and fostered them in every way! For, their rearing is all Thy doing. Where we have failed, Thou hast fulfilled: where we have been bankrupt, Thou hast been bounteous. And Thou hast brought

us one more token of Thy mercy in the faithful and loving companion and co-pilgrim of the eldest-born of these darling hopes of the House. For all these priceless gifts we render our whole-hearted thanks unto Thee.

PRARDHANA.

And on this thrice-happy day, as we render our devoutest thanks, so we offer our most fervent prayers, especially for this one out of our darlings who comes to the threshold of a new year. Coming into the bloom of life, may he grow with the fragrance of Thy goodness, the sweetness of Thy love and the sanctity of Thy holiness! Our hearts' desires and prayers Thou knowest more clearly than we can conceive. We trust in Thee and wait on Thy mercy. So foster him in body, mind and soul that by his life he might add to that blessing of goodness of which this home is designed to furnish a radiant example. May he prove worthy of the home and the family! The name he bears—may it be signalised in the happiest manner! And may he thrive even as an ever-green and ever-fragrant bower planted in Thy Eden, thus to shelter and cheer hundreds of lives! Vouchsafe Thy grace and reveal Thy purpose unto him, that he may be ever devoted unto truth

and rightful conduct and ever feel nerved and sustained in loyalty to justice and love. Thus may he, nurtured in truth and exalted by righteousness, grow into the full altitude of God-sustained, God-blessed manhood! We implore Thy blessing on all that form a fraternity with him—his brothers and his sisters and those whom Thy love has recreated into their brothers and sisters. And now, as we witness this feast of the soul, we once again render profoundest thanks unto Thee and devoutly dedicate our little energies unto Thy service.

ASEESH.

May Thy love prevail in all the homes and Thy truth triumph in all the worlds! May Thy blessing rest on all children, till the world becomes a home with no divisions and no transgressions—a temple in which for ever dwell Thou the Parent and we the fraternity of loving adorers! Blessed be Thy name now and for ever!

Om! Brahma Kripahi Kevalam !

Om ! Santhih ! Santhih ! Santhih !

Om ! Harih Om !

VI
SERVICE *
with Sermon on
'THE TWO HERMITS'
or
TRUST HIM FOR ALL.

(1927)

UDBODHANA.

Om ! Our thanks and salutations, our humble, reverent obeisances and devout, worshipful adorations unto Him the *Brahmasudharmapradatha*, the Giver, Vouchsafer, Revealer and Instiller of Everlasting Faith and Imperishable Truth ! Our lowly tribute of heart-homage and soul-allegiance unto Him on this auspicious and happy occasion ! It is this spirit of rejoicing thankfulness that has gathered us together this morning. Inspired by the devotion He has fostered in the hearts of us all, we are assembled in this holy place for His worship. We meet united in spirit, harmonised in faith and

* Thanksgiving Service at the Bangalore Cantonment Brahma Mandir in connection with the Diamond Jubilee Celebrations of the Samaj (June 1927).

fraternised in devotion, to worship Him as the eternal Truth, as the inexhaustible Love, as the immaculate Holiness that for ever imparts wisdom and fosters love and instils holiness. Blessed be His infinite mercy that has vouchsafed even unto us, groping and erring, sinning and sorrowing, this supreme bliss of holding direct and intimate communion with Him, singly and jointly, each as His child and all as a fraternity of which He is the Father! We bless, praise and glorify Him that unto this humble creature, man, He has graciously granted the privilege of looking up to Him and calling Him 'My Father!' He is the Father of each one of us; the Mother from whom directly we receive our life and all its wealth of blessing; He is the Friend keeping pace with the footstep of each one of us. He is the Light that lights the path and points the goal of each earnest and trustful soul. Dispel the doubt, banish the distrust, that finds Him not now and here. He is with us, intimately in touch with each one of us. Now, enshrined at the very centre of this congregation, He is the adorable One, around whom we form the circle of worshippers; and His is the righteousness that so sanctifies every worshipper here on this solemn occasion that we feel the fullest liberty and the joyfullest assurance that we

could make up to Him with all the trustfulness of a child reaching on to its parent's arms. Myriad are the blessings vouchsafed by Him—blessings of body and mind, of knowledge and power, of goodness and grace; blessings of home, of family, of society, of country, of nation and of race; aye, blessings of intimate relation with the whole sphere of creation. These are each a blessing beyond all calculation as to worth and virtue. And yet all these are but mere accompaniments, bare auxiliaries and simple concomitants, unto this supreme blessing that we are privileged to *worship Him*. In worship we realise the true value of all His other blessings. As we adore Him, we behold the glory of the world that surrounds us; light flashes forth with unquenchable radiance throughout creation even as the glory of the eternal God. How blessed, how exalted our position, how enriched our life, how abundant the bounties of grace, as we feel His intimate nearness, His direct presence, in immediate communion with the Holy God! Blessed be His name that He has vouchsafed this blessing into us. Frail, faltering, erring yet trusting, we look up to Him and say, 'Thou art our Refuge, Solace, Hope and Strength'. And behold, He whom we missed in the mist of ignorance and in the gloom of sin, shines forth as the near God, the dear God, the

reviving God, the regenerating God, the saving God and the sanctifying God. *Him do we adore*, each one and all, with the full joy of the heart that the Supreme One has vouchsafed *Himself* unto us. Blessed be His name! The world without, how it bears glowing witness to the presence and providence of God! Nothing jars against, or conflicts with, the continuity of purpose and the harmony of hope enduring from generation to generation and age after age; and the whole creation is consecrated into one universal sanctuary where He dwells for ever in love and holiness. As we behold the glory of His immanent presence in the world around us, what shall we do but join the universal chorus of praise and glorification, thanksgiving and beatification, unto Him? Retreat we, then, into the individual self and seek the presence of Him who dwells in the heart of each one of His creatures; and there as we behold Him in His wisdom, love, beauty and holiness, as the Truth, the Essence and the Joy of life, sustaining all, sanctifying all, worship we Him with the offering of our devoted love, and glorify we Him in souls ecstatic with the bliss of holy communion with Him! As we realise Him, all our paltry distinctions vanish. So gather we, one and all, around our God,

our Parent and Friend, our Guide and Saviour. Blessed, blessed be His name, now and for ever !

ARADHANA.

Thou, the Eternal, All-Perfect God ! We have met here to adore Thee. Thou hast brought us together that we may be blessed with the supreme happiness of worshipping Thee as our dear God, our own beloved God. Thou art truly here with us and amidst us. Nay, Thou art within each one of us. Yet Thou pervadest this fraternity of worshippers as the all-unifying, all-sanctifying Spirit. Indeed, what art Thou not unto one and all of us ? Truly, Thou art All-in-all unto us. As Thou revealest Thyself in the impressiveness and the glory of Thy perfection, we praise Thy mercy and proclaim Thy majesty.

Blessed be Thou, oh eternal Truth, *Satyam* ! Art Thou not the only *Satyam*—the Truth, the Reality, the very Essence of the whole universe ? Aye, the entire order of creation finds the guarantee of its reality only in Thee. Thou art the *Satyam* that Science calls energy or force. Thou art the *Satyam* that the universe is founded upon. Before Thee as, for ever, the imperishable Truth, the invincible Truth, the all-controlling Truth, the all-vitalising Truth, the all-vindicating Truth, we bow

down in the humble spirit of seekers after Truth. As Thou art Truth, Thou art the Truth of all the truths man has known—that Truth unto which alone we can confidently turn with the appeal for right inspiration. Thou art that Truth which, with its heavenly radiance, illumines the universe. Not only the stars which shine from age to age but the souls that seek after Thee in the pilgrimage of the holy quest of Truth through untold eons, find in Thee the Wisdom that makes manifest the deep mystery and the transcendent destiny of life. Before Thee as *Jnanam*, that all-discovering, all-explaining, all-justifying Wisdom, even a single glimpse of which enables the seer to pierce through the thickest gloom and the saint to vanquish the deadliest sin, we humbly bow with the reverence of discipleship. Thou art the Infinite One, *Anantam*, limitless, boundless, shoreless. The nature of Thy Eternal Being eluding all, baffling all scrutiny, Thou art the Infinite One that graciously vivifies our whole being, radiates into our souls through every star and charms our hearts through every flower. Thou art Everlasting Life, inexhaustible and perennial, with an interminable abundance of enduring vitality and sustaining strength; and we are but tiny, feeble ripples on the profound main of Infinity. Before Thy mercy-seat, as Thy

offspring, we bow with the deepest reverence and with absolute self-surrender. Thou art *Ananda-roopam*, the real substance and the very essence of Joy and Bliss. In their ignorance and their passion, men stand against one another. But serene through all conflicts and rivalries, Thine own blessed spirit of *Anandam* prevails over all the jars and clashes of the world. Thou art the *Anandam* in the heart of things—in the mother's heart knit to the child's heart, in the heart of every way-worn but trustful pilgrim. Thou art the gladness of the *Anandam* that, to our rejoicing senses, appears to bloom in the unnoticed flower and to sing in the unheeded bird and that, age after age, smiles with the sweetness of benediction from countless stars upon our listless globe. Thou art the *Anandam* that thrills with joy the heart of the humble devotee and enraptures the spirit of the reverent seeker, as he catches gleams of eternal Wisdom. Thou art the *Anandam* of the faithful servant who, mindful of others' needs, foregoes all comforts and dedicates himself to selfless service, thus to light the lamp of hope to cheer all around him. Thou art the *Anandam* of those who, possessed with the passion to proclaim Thy Love and Beneficence, traverse the world that they might bear witness unto Thy goodness and

grace abiding in the souls of men. Thou art the *Anandam* that, even now and here, enraptures this congregation of worshippers, as they are vouchsafed the indescribable blessing of living communion with Thee. Thee we adore as *Anandam*; and in Thee we rejoice as the Giver of all *anandam*. Thou art *Amritam*, Deathlessness. Ah! Is there death in Thy creation? Man calls that death which Thou designest to be resurrection. Thou God of sublimation, of transfiguration, of regeneration into ever-ascending, everlasting life, Thou art the guarantee that not one iota shall lapse and not one soul shall vanish so as to defeat the very end and purpose of Thy creation—life and love in ever-increasing abundance. Thou art the Immortal One in whom we, the offspring of immortality, achieve the fulfilment, in heavenly perfection, of our being. As the Immortal One, Thou manifestest Thyself everywhere, in Thy ceaselessly self-unfolding presence and providence, as the God of Love and Holiness. Dear One, beset with the benignity of Thy blissful manifestation, what shall we experience except serene *santhi*, that peace which nothing can disturb while the whole universe is enveloped with the calm atmosphere of Thy divine tranquillity? What care can distract the peace, what trouble can try the

fidelity, of him who evermore has Thee for his All-in-all? Thou art the *Santhi* which passes like the soothing zephyrs upon the feverish spirits of men, the gentle dew of contented and confiding trust. As the volcanic fury of passion exhausts itself with the spent-out rage of the wicked, then descends the *santhi* of Thy healing and revivifying benediction, and all is once again peace! Earth looks frightfully devastated with the havoc of war; and yet the very same earth Thou once again smoothest and cheerest into a fertile field of revived life and rekindled joy. Thunder crashes and lightning pierces; yet, lo and behold, Thy refreshing showers of mercy descend; and *santhi* is the word that comes voluntarily on the lips of the humble and the trustful. Before Thee as *Santhi* we bow down with all the confiding trust of our souls. Thou art Love, *Sivam*. We know Thee as the Love all-unifying, all-harmonising and all-cherishing—the Love that matures revivifying hope, regenerating faith and redeeming goodness into complete, trustful self-surrender unto Thy Will. Before Thee as *Sivam*, the God of love and beneficence, we bow down with all the gratitude of our hearts. As we realise in Thee the all-loving and all-cherishing One, Thou art made manifest as the *Ekamevadwiteeyam*, unbounded, undivided, unsurpassed, in Thy

all-embracing Unity ; and Thou revealest to adoring spirits how, with all its myriad-fold, multifarious contents, this universe is one composite system, one perfect orb, revolving along the orbit, within the ambit, of the Divine self-manifestation, following the path prescribed by the one providential God, fulfilling the destiny designed by the one all-wise God and reflecting the glory of the one ever-effulgent God. Thee as *Adwaitam* we adore with the profoundest submission of our lives. As we thus realise Thee as the one Undivided and the one All-perfect, we behold Thee and reverence Thee as the *Suddham*, the All-holy One of perfect purity, of immaculate sanctity. Thou, the Supreme Author of our being, what are we if not the nurslings of Holiness, truly faithful and abundantly blissful reproductions of Holiness ? Each one of us is thus a pure child of the Holy Father. Thee as the Holy One we adore with the sanctified love of our souls. Blessed, blessed, blessed be Thy name, now and for ever !

DHYANAMU.

(Congregational Chant.)

Bhavambodhipotham saranyam vrajamah ! Thou art the Pilot across this wide, wayless ocean of the

universe, and under Thy unerring piloting we launch out on the voyage of our being. We trust, we confide in, we render ourselves unto, Thy guidance. With unquestioning faith we seek refuge in Thee. We would be, not of those that run away from life as a peril, but of those that seek to fulfil the divine purpose of life under the sure guidance and with the sacred blessing of the Pilot of all creation. Lead us, we beseech Thee, out of the unreality of falseness into the reality of Truth, out of the darkness of *ajnanam* into the sunshine of *jnanam*; out of the mortality of sinfulness into the immortality of righteousness. Oh! Thou self-effulgent One, do Thou reveal Thyself unto and within each heart. Thou All-inspiring One, cast the radiance of Thy wisdom and the smile of Thy love upon each one of us, now and for ever!

DHANYAVADASAMARPANAMU.

Thou, the Ancient One of ages! All our days and seasons—the full round of years and the whole cycle of ages—all are under Thy guidance, of Thy ordaining and in perfect accord with Thy purposes. We behold Thy all-designing, all-controlling wisdom, Thy all-fostering, all-embracing Love and Thy all-sanctifying, all-blessing holiness. And on

this solemn occasion we reverently turn to Thee and intently reflect on the wisdom that Thou hast discovered, the love that Thou hast bestowed and the holiness that Thou hast imparted during these thrice-score years of the life-time of this our dear Samaj. As the gardener planteth his seedling and taketh loving thought of it, to spread the shade, to keep out the blast, to temper the heat and to regulate the rains—all to help its growth; so, in ways at first unknown to man, even unsought of man, and yet convincing unto man and cheering unto man, Thou hast fostered this sapling these twice three decades. And our hearts, hitherto alternately vibrating with suspense and with assurance, now render unto Thee the adoration of ardent praise and profound gratitude. Thy gracious spirit, Thy loving providence, has directly planned and guided and unfailingly sheltered and protected this little Home of Worshippers. For all this benignant we render our profoundly grateful thanks unto Thee. How incessant Thy watch and ward! How impressively Thou hast unfolded purpose after purpose and raised worker after worker in this Thy harvest field, and sweetened all service and strengthened all fellowship and graciously blessed the whole life of this little Church of Thine! For all this we render our whole-hearted thanks unto Thee.

How grateful we should feel for them all who have laboured before us and for our benefit, summoned of Thee to subserve Thy grand purposes—princes and prophets among men; persons of exalted spirit commissioned to be Thy messengers—faith-bringers, light-bearers and hope-harbingers! For the blessed bond of those elect ones, ordained and ordered forth by Thee for the inspiration, invigoration and sanctification of Thy children, we render our whole-hearted thanks unto Thee. Even, out of our own direct, personal witness of Thy goodness and Thy grace, we recall with profound gratitude the many manifestations of Thy spirit in the household of Thy truth, as brought out and disclosed in this Church of the One True God. For the faith they fed, for the hope they kindled and for the charity they imparted, we render our whole-hearted thanks unto Thee. In the humble history of this sweet House of Worship, how Thy mercy has manifested itself unto young and old, high and humble, learned and simple, male and female, all brought together here with one longing of the heart and one yearning of the soul to worship and glorify Thee and to record Thy mercy to them, to each and to all, as a chapter in the eternal gospel of goodness and grace writ large on the countless

tablets of creation through untold ages ! Put into us, we beseech Thee, the faith that comes of visioned grace, the hope that springs from experienced goodness, and the love that emanates from enjoyed communion ; and grant that, like those that went before us, we that follow in their footsteps prove steadfast and trustful in our fidelity to Thee, hopeful and joyful in our confidence in Thee, and united in our loving, adoring and self-surrendering lives dedicated unto Thee. Bless us and bless all those that are in heart-harmony with this church and this congregation ; and may Thy blessing thus grow and amplify evermore into our sole shelter and strength, our supreme hope and joy ! So shall our lives testify to Thy mercy and bless Thee and glorify Thy name now and for ever !

ADESAPRATHEEKSHA.

And now, as Thy children did in the past, so do I, in trustful submission, turn to Thee, the Eternal Repository of the abundant testimonies of the past and of the boundless promises of the future. Humbly and reverently, I turn to Thee and supplicate the guidance of Thy light. Who am I that I should report and testify to these, Thy children, that Thou art the Ancient One of days ; the brooding God, the pervading God, the providing God, the

nursing God, the nourishing God, the cherishing God, the fostering God, the illumining God, the guiding God, the redeeming God, the saving God, the sanctifying God, the blessing God—the God of illimitable love and inexhaustible mercy? Who am I, enveloped in ignorance, shrouded in the gloom of sin, withering with the utter drought of faith, that I should minister unto the spirits of these, my sisters and brethren? And yet how else could this happen, except through the urge of 'Thine own spirit, that I should thus chance to be ordained to this sacred duty? What 'Thou ordainest is Thy purpose. And even as through the lowliest of the lowly Thou choosest to raise the note of hope and to deliver the message of grace, I confide in Thee out of Thy own ordaining. Bless this very happy occasion and bless us, one and all, in Thee, and be Thou blessed of us now and for ever!

UPADESAMU.

It is said there lived two hermits, secluded in their small single cell; and they both felt that to feed their little lamps in the night, they needed oil; and each planted a tree from which to obtain it. As the plants began to grow, one of the hermits would incessantly turn to God and say: 'Grant light unto my plant, lest it should be

colourless and sapless ; and next, send down ample showers, for without them it will droop ; and then, mix up the various manures in due proportions, that it be fed aright ; and again, vouchsafe that, season after season, the right measure of shelter and protection be extended to it, lest it should perish for want of requisite care and attention !' The other hermit planted his sapling and said, 'Lord, that I might have a gleam of light in my cell, even as a token of Thy glory, I have planted this : oh, let it grow under Thy care. I shall not presume to prescribe for its up-bringing, by naming its needs to Thee ; I shall humbly render unto it such little services of care as Thou promptest, and trust to Thee for its growth and the fulfilment of its object.' The story goes on that the plant of the hermit who, day and night, dunned for specific gifts of God and besought the many acts of providential protection, refused to grow and soon perished ; while its neighbour flourished and realised the object of its existence. Thus it is ours to plant and God's to grow ; ours to till and God's to harvest ; ours to serve and God's to bless. The whole history of the Brahma Samaj abounds in, is replete with, instances of this kind of trustful toil, wherein the humble sower sows and the Sovereign Reaper reaps.

One more noteworthy instance of man's trustful service and God's benignant blessing is furnished even through the annals of our local Samaj. Started, as we read, on 2nd September, 1866, it was, presumably to indicate its affinity to the hoary traditions of the country and to convey needful assurance to those who might look askance at outlandish garbs, first named the *Veda Samaj* and the *Bhajana Goshti*. Thus employed, week after week, for united chanting of the name of the One Only God by all who congregated there in a spirit of unsectarianism and with an eager, adoring purpose, it endured, with one worker dropping and another stepping into his place, till there came in help and cooperation from diverse quarters. Then, as the message of God renewed its access into the hearts and homes of men through the occasional media of journals, pamphlets and tracts from abroad, the reverent spirit of worship continued to sanctify every occupation of life as a sacrament to promote the purpose of God and to sweeten and strengthen all relations by a reference to the will of God; the whole round of existence thus sought to be finished into a full orb radiant with the quenchless lustre of devout worship. Next was provided the very valuable facility of a local habitation, even this one in which we are now met for worship.

Again, supplemented by the reinforcing strength of others coming to live in this station and joining heart and soul with the local worshippers, the purpose of the Samaj became known to an increasing circle of sympathetic enquirers. Nay, more : as is but natural and quite in consonance with the world-wide, universal outlook of the God-illuminated Founder of the Brahma Samaj, this Samaj also felt how the worship of God in spirit necessarily implied also the service of man in love ; since to worship God in spirit and not to cherish man in love is really to practise, not true piety, but false pretence ; for the love of man is ever the natural sequel to the adoration of God. Thus the Samaj was instinctively led to make its usefulness felt through humane activities calculated to carry, to the recipient of the service, a sense of the light of truth, of the sweetness of love and the bliss of holiness. The various activities known in these days as social reform and social service were one by one brought into operation and have since been sustained with strenuous endeavour. That small congregation which, sixty years ago, started with a few souls for the simple purpose of meeting to chant the holy name of God, has steadily disclosed its innate potentialities and latent purposes, till we are delighted to behold, this day, a Samaj, not big as reckoned by the roll of

membership, yet an institution that is an active and well-organised expression of God's providence.

Those who know its history can easily recall how persons in various walks of life and in diverse positions have been moved by the Spirit to contribute to the growth and expansion of this Samaj. That good man of God to whose benefaction the Samaj owes this beautiful *mandir*, a lover of God's humanity worthily acclaimed as *Dharmaratnakara*—God put it into his heart that what had been a bare plot of ground, serving no purpose, should be utilised for a sanctified shrine unto the Holy Spirit. Again, when we remember how in this much-divided Country there exist certain sections of people who are considered to lie outside the pale of progressive activities—the depressed classes and the women, do we not recall also how in this Samaj there has been the striking instance of a member of one of the depressed classes rising in life, through the grace of God, by acquiring knowledge and obtaining recognition and creating deep conviction, by means of valuable services in the field of health and physical comfort, that even one from among the so-called depressed classes could be, in God's estimation, a soul of rare virtue and worth? Dr. M. Das rose to be a District Medical

Officer, though springing from sources which men, in their narrowness, pronounce utterly unpromising; and he bore his great testimony to the glory of God. Similarly, that good sister whose dear memory is cherished with affection and esteem in the hearts and homes of so many and whose name is reverently associated with a truly beneficent institution, furnishes a noteworthy example of the fruit of the devotion of one's heart to one's God in sincere worship: Sreemati Bachammal, the ever-beloved and ever-cherished consort of our esteemed brother, Balasundaram Mudalliar—himself, in his turn, a remarkable instance of indefatigable services rendered to the cause dear to us all. That honoured sister shed the light of hope and spread the aroma of joy around her. These are, indeed, valuable tokens of God's direct dealings in the history of the Samaj. From another view-point, the fact that the glorious emissary of God whom we in the Andhradesa hold exalted in our profound admiration as the father of a new era—the modern epoch—in the life of the people in that part of the country, the fact that he should, in spirit and in person, have come to far-off Bangalore and conveyed to receptive hearts here the blessed message of hope that shaped itself into a living, regenerating institution through his noble life—what was it but the doing of God?

And the response to the influence of that inspiring spirit has rightly taken an enduring form of public good in your Veeresalingam Memorial Hall. That illustrates the unifying power of the Brahma Samaj—that he, the redeeming father of the neglected, if not ill-used, Hindu widow, should have transplanted his love of the widow into the hearts of some members even of this remote Samaj, and that among the outstanding achievements of this Samaj should be prominently counted an enduring embodiment of the hope and the joy he has been able to bring unto hearts to which a callous community has only declared, ‘Abandon ye all hope and joy in this life. Again, the other day there passed away to the great Beyond a dear brother of ours, Mr. Seshachela Mudalliar, whose esteemed father, Mr. Ayyaswami Mudalliar, was one of the founders of this Samaj. Stripped of all possessions and devoid of all facilities in life, yet our brother clung to the Samaj, like a bird clinging to its own dear nest despite pinching hunger and inclement weather. That again shows how winsome and glad-some the message of the Brahma Samaj is even to those upon whom ‘chill penury’ lays its icy hand. With Ayyaswami Mudalliar was associated, in unflinching devotion to the Samaj and untiring labours on its behalf, Mr. Gopalasawmi Iyer, a

teacher. He was a pioneer of literary work, in Tamil, to carry the message of the Samaj to earnest seekers after Truth. Once more, there is that esteemed sister of ours, Saradammal, oppressed with sore family cares and harrowing bereavements, and yet so cherishing the interests of the Samaj and so desirous of furthering the cause as to undertake the completion of what for a considerable length of time has lain yonder in an unfinished form, namely, the proposed mission-house—an object of persistent prayer and yet a spectacle of perishing hope. How truly God fulfils Himself in various ways! With these three typical institutions to call our own—this temple of worship, that hall of social unity and that home of self-donating ministration—with these grouped here into one inspiration, can we conceive of a nobler spot in this City, and shall we not render our devoutest thanks to our God that even unto us He has given to vision this soul-sanctifying sight? Furthermore, in unexpected, unforeseen ways, such splendid services could be, and have been, rendered to this great State through distinguished representatives of the Brahma Samaj. We have one, the fame of whose rare skill and ability as a healer of certain sore afflictions of the human body has spread far and wide in the land, as he

And the response to the influence of that inspiring spirit has rightly taken an enduring form of public good in your Veeresalingam Memorial Hall. That illustrates the unifying power of the Brahma Samaj—that he, the redeeming father of the neglected, if not ill-used, Hindu widow, should have transplanted his love of the widow into the hearts of some members even of this remote Samaj, and that among the outstanding achievements of this Samaj should be prominently counted an enduring embodiment of the hope and the joy he has been able to bring unto hearts to which a callous community has only declared, ‘Abandon ye all hope and joy in this life. Again, the other day there passed away to the great Beyond a dear brother of ours, Mr. Seshachela Mudalliar, whose esteemed father, Mr. Ayyaswami Mudalliar, was one of the founders of this Samaj. Stripped of all possessions and devoid of all facilities in life, yet our brother clung to the Samaj, like a bird clinging to its own dear nest despite pinching hunger and inclement weather. That again shows how winsome and glad-some the message of the Brahma Samaj is even to those upon whom ‘chill penury’ lays its icy hand. With Ayyaswami Mudalliar was associated, in unflinching devotion to the Samaj and untiring labours on its behalf, Mr. Gopalasawmi Iyer, a

teacher. He was a pioneer of literary work, in Tamil, to carry the message of the Samaj to earnest seekers after Truth. Once more, there is that esteemed sister of ours, Saradammal, oppressed with sore family cares and harrowing bereavements, and yet so cherishing the interests of the Samaj and so desirous of furthering the cause as to undertake the completion of what for a considerable length of time has lain yonder in an unfinished form, namely, the proposed mission-house—an object of persistent prayer and yet a spectacle of perishing hope. How truly God fulfils Himself in various ways! With these three typical institutions to call our own—this temple of worship, that hall of social unity and that home of self-donating ministration—with these grouped here into one inspiration, can we conceive of a nobler spot in this City, and shall we not render our devoutest thanks to our God that even unto us He has given to vision this soul-sanctifying sight? Furthermore, in unexpected, unforeseen ways, such splendid services could be, and have been, rendered to this great State through distinguished representatives of the Brahma Samaj. We have one, the fame of whose rare skill and ability as a healer of certain sore afflictions of the human body has spread far and wide in the land, as he

presides over a renowned hospital where are rendered services of high value to suffering humanity. As we recall the fact that Dr. Ramaswami Iyengar was led into the Brahma Samaj by Lady J. C. Bose, the honoured consort of the world-renowned discoverer of profound truths—how their casual meeting as co-students at the Madras Medical College marked the beginning of a beneficent fraternal relationship, we note in what marvellous ways the purposes of God fulfil themselves. Nay, higher up in the field of work, the son of him who was the pioneer of devoted services unto humanity in the Brahma Samaj, Sevavrata Brahmarshi Sasipada Banerjee—he was called to the highest position of power and influence, of opportunities for service and usefulness; and he gave to this State the best years of his active life, in wide knowledge and mature experience, so that it might steadily advance along the path of progress which it has been the singular good fortune of this great State to prescribe to itself as its distinguishing feature. Once more, as this State, the first among Indian States to desire a self-contained institution for the spread of high-aimed and wide-looking culture, has established a University of its own, it is from within the Brahma Samaj that a savant of rare, almost matchless, erudition

whose rich stores of learning have been liberally laid under contribution in diverse directions, has been obtained, to guide and foster the development of the Mysore University. Before we pass from this part of the retrospect, let us for a few moments dwell, gratefully and reverently, upon two hallowed memories. Subedar Major Appavoo Pillai was a unique instance of an officer of the Indian Army cherishing soul-deep attachment for the Brahma Samaj. Wherever his regiment was garrisoned, he toiled hard to establish a Samaj. His spirit exercised considerable influence, in favour of the Samaj, upon not a few of his comrades. On his retirement, he settled down here at Bangalore; and the welfare of the Samaj was uppermost in his thoughts even in his closing days. He rendered both the homage of his heart and the tribute of his worldly possessions to the Samaj. As we all know, a girl-school, endowed by him and maintained by this Samaj, is the memorial of his devotion to the good cause. In a different sphere, but with like ardour, was devoted, dedicated, to the Brahma Samaj the noble soul, with its rich gifts, of Pandit Chandrasekhara Sastri. He had migrated (shall we not avow that he had been led by the Holy Spirit?) from some place in the Bombay Presidency to the State of Mysore. Already a

profound Sanskrit scholar, he studied here and mastered the vernacular of the State, Kannada; and he has considerably enriched the literature of the Brahma Samaj by his works written in the Kanarese language, signalised by deep thought, great learning and intense devotion. The truth of what has been so lucidly and impressively brought home to us by revered Pandit Sitanath Tattva-bhushan—namely, the metaphysical principle of ‘unity-in-difference,’ is set forth by Pandit Chandrasekhara Sastri with much force and perspicuity in one of his writings. With a glow in the eye, he would speak of the whole fraternity of the Brahma Samaj as his kith and kin (‘my people’). The worth of this great man’s life and labours is yet to be disclosed to the world. Thus we see that, alike in humble office and in exalted place, the Brahma Samaj has, in this region, been vouchsafed unique opportunities of rendering services of rare merit unto the glory of God.

One distinguishing feature of this Samaj is the presence of a certain compactness and organised unity among its members—a source of genial satisfaction and sincere thankfulness to all well-wishers. How nicely the whole concern is carried on, in sustained continuity, by the self-denying,

self-rendering devotion of one or two, strengthened with the willing co-operation of several others ! As we briefly review the past, have we not the justification to cherish the hope and the confidence that the future is safe in God's hands ? In its capacity for reciprocal affection and mutual service, it has the credential that God designs it for His benignant purpose. It seeks to educate the neglected ; it endeavours to foster the rejected ; it attempts to unite the scattered ; it aspires to carry the message of hope and peace and joy to young and old. Above all, it supplicates the grace of God and lays itself open to the inflow of the Divine Spirit. Therefore, hereafter we shall have hope in the heart and light in the eye ; and we shall cherish the belief that our outlook on life shall enlarge evermore. Not to indulge in self-praise or give way to pompous boast, but to speak from heart-deep conviction, I avow that he who founded the Brahma Samaj delivered a message which carries in itself the guiding suggestions and the strengthening potentialities for all the great needs and aspirations of the country. To the Brahma, thanks to the message of Ram Mohan, the so-called difficulties, for example, in the way of Hindu-Moslem unity are an utter surprise and a great puzzle. Likewise, to the Brahma, true to the spirit of Ram Mohan, who declared that the unknown

orphan shall be the embraced child, the whole problem of the uplift of the so-called depressed classes is only the question of the preparedness of man for the behests of God. Come all ye, said Ram Mohan, into the temple of the worship of the One True God, in utter disregard of the arbitrary distinctions of creed, caste and class. And thus to come together in the *mandir* is to hail a sister or a brother with 'You are as much a worshipping child of God as myself'; and after that avowal, to snarl, 'Thou shalt stand apart and not trespass on forbidden ground,' is to barter away the golden lustre of truth for the pinchbeck glitter of prejudice. Again, the Brahma Samaj has everywhere been a living witness to the possibilities, the hidden worth, of neglected women-folk. This day, few as the Brahmos are amidst the vast population of the country, there is no other community of the limited size of the Brahma Samaj with so large a section of educated women in it. As for general leadership in the country, outside directly religious reform-work, one has only to name Mr. A. M. Bose, Lord Sinha, Sir K. G. Gupta, Sir R. G. Bhandarkar, Justice M. G. Ranade and Sir N. G. Chandavarkar, to confine the view to those that have joined the immortals and not to speak of a whole host of others, and one can

realise how the Brahma Samaj has had the high honour of making an ample contribution to the all-round advancement of the country. That is the Divine *firman* for every Samaj, the sacred charter from God for every Church of the Theistic Dispensation. If only it be true to its rich heritage in this glorious Household of God, then, to every Samaj shall be guaranteed a great future for making some enduring contribution to the lasting progress and prosperity of mankind. Let us remind ourselves on this solemn occasion that, as in the past, so in the future, spiritual worship, in truth, love and righteousness, is the vital centre, the quickening core, of the life of the Brahma Samaj; and the secret, the mystery, of its strength, is that God can be worshipped, God is to be worshipped, with the spontaneity of the eye rejoicing in beauty and of the heart enraptured with love. Oh, what has not this worship been unto the Brahma Samaj? Aye, its daily food and its hourly sustenance. So let it for ever be our store-house of strength and our fountain-spring of joy. And at this solemn moment, let us enter again into a fresh covenant and make a new vow that through worship we shall realise the purpose, the general and individual purpose, of the Brahma Samaj.

PRARDHANA.

Dear God, our stay and strength, our hope and joy! How on the tablets of our hearts are imperishably recorded the enrapturing experiences of worshipping Thee in spirit—in sorrow, soothing comfort; in sickness, healing consolation; in helplessness, reassuring strength; in poverty, contenting abundance; in perplexity, directing light; in labour, sweetening grace; in loneliness, cheering companionship; and, above all, in contemplation, the rapture of spiritual communion! Dear God, how gladdening it is to see that we are assembled here in this cordial fellowship of united worship that Thou hast created for us! If out of one stock there spring up divers branches and there is charm in that very growth, how holy, how heavenly, must be the charm of the union and fellowship that Thou hast vouchsafed, for the ecstatic happiness of souls, in common, conjoint worship! Instil into us the spirit of faith to accept Thy worship as the firmest root and Thy service as the noblest fruit of life. Despite our tremendous frailties and transgressions, help us to acknowledge unto Thee our preparedness to follow Thy light, to do Thy bidding and to surrender ourselves to Thy keeping. We would adore Thee as the God of Truth; we would love Thee as the God of Goodness; and we

would render our lives unto Thee as the God of Holiness. Make us organs of Thy Truth, receptacles of Thy Love, sharers of Thy Holiness. Shape our destinies and lead our days that we be blessed in the accomplishment of Thy will and in the self-dedicated service of humanity, all for Thy glory. Sanctify us, Thou all-holy God; and be Thou praised and blessed in the life of each one of us. Bless all that have prepared this happy day for us. Bless all that would uphold the purpose and amplify the outlook in the days to come.

ASEESH.

May Thy truth for ever triumph! May Thy love for ever reign! And may Thy holiness prove the perfected bliss of the whole creation!

Om! Brahma Kripahi Kevalam!

Om! Santhih! Santhih! Santhih!

Om! Harih Om!

VII

BIRTH-DAY FAMILY SERVICE.

(1928)

UDBODHANA.

Render we the homage of our whole-hearted devotion and self-surrender unto Him who claims, by eternal right divine, our full, unqualified allegiance; the supreme Giver of all gifts, entitled to our profoundest gratitude and reverence. From Him comes the bounty which baffles all human calculation; and into every gift of His He imparts Himself, His Holy Spirit, and thus renders the gift supremely divine. He is, not merely the distant Care-taker, not only the benevolent Purveyor, but the intimate Friend that abides with one and all, the unfailing Companion of each soul in the pilgrimage of life. Unto Him we are met here, even by the promptings of His grace, to render our hearts' dearest, sweetest and holiest offerings of gratitude and glorification. He has brought us here together on this thrice-happy and deeply solemn occasion to

* At Dunmore, Madras, on the eighteenth birth-day of the Senior Maharajkumar of Pithapuram (31-10-28).

own and acknowledge the worth and virtue of the precious and beloved gift He has vouchsafed unto us during these eighteen years. How shall the tongue be kept from uttering its most endearing words of praise and thanksgiving? How shall the heart fail to experience a thrill of quickening joy on this blessed occasion? The soul longs with the spontaneity of impelled reverence to proclaim the Goodness which has been bountiful to us beyond words and even beyond thought and understanding. Unto Him, the good God, the gracious God, the loving God, the cherishing God, the saving God, the ever-available and all-holy God, we render our hearts' humble and reverent worship. Beyond doubt, He is the *Brahmandapathi*. He is also the *Nadha* of each heart. And again, He is the guiding Light, the sanctifying Holiness, of each home. We are here in a home rendered the temple of God, as He is enshrined in the heart of the home, to adore Him as our own dear God of the home. This beautiful conjunction of spirits shining with the glory imparted of truth and righteousness, He has arrayed as a token of His unlimited grace. How can we render adequate thanks unto Him for His overwhelming mercies, each abundant in love and all surpassingly

marvellous in the order in which they come and the grace they reveal?

Every life is a gospel of God, and every day brings renewed tidings of His love and mercy. He is, not only the wise God who plans and designs and executes, but pre-eminently the merciful God who cherishes, nourishes and fosters with His inexhaustible love. For all this benediction we render unto Him our profoundest reverence on this blessed occasion.

ARADHANA and PRARDHANA.

'Thou art our God. Thou hast granted unto us this supreme privilege to call Thee our God, aye, our Father. Thought is helpless, imagination is baffled, to conceive and apprehend Thee as the Supreme One, Maker and Master of these myriad orbs. Yet how near, how dear, how intimate Thou art to the heart of each one of us, out-reaching the *mahath*, the vast and immense, yet indwelling the *anu*, even the least little atom! Thou shinest as the central Radiance. From Thee we receive all the light of truth, all the wealth of love, all the charm of beauty, and all the grace of righteousness. Thou art Thyself Truth and Wisdom, Mercy and Loving-kindness, all-redeeming

Righteousness and all-sanctifying Holiness. Beloved God, how blessed it is that into our lowly hearts Thou dost impart Thyself as the Beloved One! But for Thy condescending grace, it were impossible for us even to cast a glance at Thy sovereign majesty. But such is Thy winning charm that we are drawn to Thee with the trust and confidence of children leaping forth into the embrace of their mother. Oh, the ineffable bliss of calling Thee Mother—the Mother in every maternal bosom, the Mother that cherishes in tenderness and sanctifies with holiness! Words are all too stale, thoughts are all too low, all the powers of man are too feeble, as they seek to praise and glorify Thee as the Divine Mother. Thou art here present as the Mother of us all. In Thy ‘eternal arms’ Thou gatherest us all into one fraternity, not merely by the attraction of acquaintance, not even by the affinities of friendship, but even by the harmonising, unifying, sanctifying spirit of conjoint worship offered unto Thee. Thou bliss in our hearts, Thy beaming face the very heaven in our souls, with devout adoring spirits we glorify Thee. Blessed, blessed be Thy name, now and for ever!

Thou God of measureless mercy! Countless are the occasions when, unasked, unexpected, Thou

didst bestow Thy mercy upon each one of us. What is this immense creation but the expression of Thy mercy and love? The wise might discern purpose and design; and the investigator might discover law and order. But unto me, of the humble and the lowly, Thou art the God of mercy and this universe abundantly rich with Thy mercy. The sun and the stars above; the bracing breath of the sweet breezes around; the cheering inflow of sunshine all about; the unfailing alternation of day and night; every dawn reawakening and rekindling the whole world into new life and fresh joy; the cycle of the seasons, each with its own donation of mercy—of freshness or vigour or richness or repose—all are the manifestations of Thy mercy. Stands there the mountain in its towering majesty, flows there the crystal current in its gleaming smiles, blooms there the meadow with its sylvan charms, gambols there the kid in the buoyance of animal spirits, carols there the bird in the melting notes of rapture? Verily, all these are unto us the vivid expressions of Thy inmost being. Friend greeting friend, preceptor guiding pupil, child leaning on parent in trust; parent leading child in affection; indeed, the whole circle of our associations, and even they that have gone ahead to hail us into our eternal home—these all are the

evangels of Thy mercy. In every throb of the heart, in every beat of the pulse, in every sight, in every sound, in every ray, in every dew-drop; we experience Thy mercy. The body, the mind, the heart, the soul—all report to us the abundance of Thy mercy. Thy myriad blessings, countless for our calculation, but each endowed with sweetness for our enjoyment, Thou dost perennially vouchsafe unto us. Gathered into this circle of a worshipping fraternity, we feel assured of the heavenly bliss that Thou hast designed for us all. Not only this; but even now and here, Thou dost reveal Thyself, Thou dost impart Thyself, unto our hearts. Thy other gifts are meant for our growth; but this crowning mercy of Thy self-donation is for our salvation, our eternal beatitude. Where man despises, thou cherishest; when man neglects, Thou attendest; where man contemns, Thou redeemest. Thus Thy mercy is manifest, in its heavenly glory, in the most uninteresting concerns of our lives. Amidst the world's temptations, Thou pourest the baptism of Thy grace upon the soul. All history is the wonderful unfolding of Thy dispensation of mercy. In the nurture of body, in the guidance of life, in the harmony of home, in the discharge of public duty,

in the progress of thought, in the uplift of humanity, in the co-operation of endeavours, in the interfusion of ideals, in the confluence of aspirations, in the league of nations, in the federation of faiths, we discern the dispensations of Thy mercy. We are the ever-cherished members in the family of Thy mercy. And for all this affluence of mercy, we bless Thy name! Fill us with soul-deep gratitude for Thy unfailing mercy; and teach us to adore Thee, in our hearts and our homes, as the God of mercy—rendering mercy, dispensing mercy, exalting mercy as the mother of every home, and installing mercy as the sovereign upon every throne.

Out of Thy myriad mercies, we are met here, under Thy benediction, gratefully to dwell upon, and reverently to render thanks for, one great gift of Thy mercy unto us. A child the world calls it; a cherub the heart greets it. The world names it an offspring; the heart enfolds it a blessing—a Divine gift. How poor our thoughts and words are to describe, to appreciate, to render thanks for, this Thy daily, hourly miracle, that, in a manner profoundly mysterious and yet indubitably manifest, out of scanty and commonplace life, Thou dost evoke richer and nobler life, while Thou plannest

the whole destiny of the human race culminating in the divine beatification of the soul. Embodied by Thee in each being are the potentialities of truth, love and righteousness ; and thus out of a simple seed 'Thou dost gather unto 'Thyself the holy harvest of a regenerated and sanctified life. And a gift of this high virtue 'Thou hast vouchsafed unto us in this dear child. Coming after us, he comes to tell us, directly from Thee, even as an oracle of Thy wisdom and love, that 'Thou art the God of the living and Thy Providence shapes our ends for ever. What was latent and waiting in the parents 'Thou hast made gracefully patent and actively progressive in the child. Father, our human frailties fail to realise the full worth and the true greatness of the hope thus reared in our home. How it began in tiny little organisms and grew day by day through one expanding miracle of mercy, till it has attained that stage when, after our human reckoning, we say it has come of age ! Is it not of Thy personal doing, Thy merciful dispensation, that it has thus grown under our enraptured eyes—a feast unto our hearts, a joy unto our souls, and a rainbow-arch of hope to declare how 'Thou for ever presidest over every home ? This has been made our beloved one, even because of coming from Thee, the Supreme Beloved. But have we learnt to

esteem it with due solemnity, amidst our negligent, heedless and even wilful deviations from truth, purity, goodness and righteousness? Have we recognised that it has a clear claim upon our full love and devotion? Dear God, it is Thy holiness that is thus made manifest to us.

Teach us, we beseech Thee in lowliness of heart, to see Thee, to love and cherish Thee, as embosomed and enthroned in this dear child. The world calls it our child; but we see in it Thy manifestation of love and holiness. As we say in homely phrase, we concentrate in this child our hopes, our expectations, our forecasts, our benedictions, our prayers. Oh that we had the wisdom and the grace to appraise aright the mercies of these eighteen years! Again and again, Thou hast disclosed Thyself as the nourishing God of this child. Has it not grown wholly through Thy vigilant care? How its powers have developed, how its faculties have been unfolded, and how it has been enabled to vision the reality of things! We tremble with awe, not with fear, as we reflect on its future. We beseech Thee, do Thou shape its speech, illumine its mind, teach it to feel the full magnitude of its responsibility in life. Where Thou sowest liberally, Thou designest to harvest

abundantly. Be it all unto Thy praise and glory ! May the entire race be the acknowledged fraternity of this child, in the ample affection of a sanctified spirit ! Grant Thy richest blessing unto it. Thou hast taught us to hope; and we pray for all that we hope for. May the prayer be realised and fulfilled in this dear one ! Be he a guiding light and a glowing joy for many a decade to come, by the service he renders, by the strength he imparts, by the devotion he cultivates, by the life he lives ! Thus, through every faculty and power of his, and at every moment of his life, be he Thy child—Thy adorer and Thy steward ! We cherish him dear as we appraise him a divine blessing—and we entrust him to Thy providential keeping. Do Thou accept its complete care and entire guidance. We are all too frail, utterly unworthy of this sacred charge that Thou hast assigned to us. How short-sighted, weak, frail, erring we are ! For its sake, inspire us with truth and wisdom that we may help this child to become Thy worshipper and the dispenser of Thy love.

We render unto Thee our whole-hearted thanks for the other dear five, that have come after him. One following another, how they have repeated the message of Thy personal interest in

us! They have come unto us, not to be a tax and a strain upon us, but to be an assurance and a joy unto our souls. Do Thou bring them up after Thy will. May these six realise, to the fullest, the life of loving fraternity, knowing how sweet and sacred is the bond created by Thee between sisters and brothers; and be they so unified in life's purposes and interests that, not as isolated automats, but as integrated souls, they may together progress through life, dispensing mercy all around them! Grant the mother and the father the rich blessing of parental wisdom and love, that they may render unto Thee the fullest homage of gratitude through their devoted service unto these dear children.

Furthermore, we supplicate Thy blessings upon all brothers and sisters in Thy divine household. Of what account are the world's distinctions of rank and position? We are endowed with the supreme right of brotherhood, the fraternity of worshippers forming one family in the adoration of our common Creator, Preserver and Saviour. Vouchsafe Thy blessing unto one and all of us assembled here. May these, as of one family, feel happy in the service of man and blessed in the worship of God! May they be drawn so closely from their genuine

interest in the dear one whose eighteenth birth-day they joyously join with us now in keeping, that through mutual regard and united service they form one band devoted to Truth, Wisdom, Goodness and Beauty !

This very home of ours is Thy temple, every heart here is Thy shrine, filled with the great glory of Thy Holy Presence within and around. Grant, again, we beseech Thee, that the years before the child may be ampler than the years gone by, in the growth of the spirit—in the increase of knowledge, in the expansion of sympathies, in the purity of private feelings and personal desires, in breadth of outlook and generosity of judgment, that he may thus fulfil the destiny of his life in brotherly service, unto Thy glory. May he be, not in secular position only, but in active life and inner character, a prince among men whom all shall acclaim as an emblem of Thy glory ! Hallowed be Thy name, now and for ever !

Om ! Brahma Kripahi Kevalam !

Om ! Santhih ! Santhih ! Santhih !

VIII
SERVICE*
with Sermon on
DARKNESS THE SHADOW OF
PROVIDENCE.

(1929.)

UDBODHANA.

*Om ! Parabrahmaney namah ! Om ! Pranesaya
namah !*

With hearts thrilled and transported with joy unutterable, we salute, we welcome, we adore, we embrace the Lord of our hearts : our awe-inspiring yet enrapturing *Pranesa*. The bliss that is vouchsafed unto us as we are taught to know Him and to love Him as the Lord of the heart—how it sets us aglow with ecstasy ! The agitated frame quivers and the eager heart pulsates with the felt touch, with the enjoyed happiness, of our own dear Lord's presence with us—around us, within us.

* At the Brahmopasana Mandir, Masulipatam (23-11-29).

Blessed be the Spouse Divine of the soul that, time and again, He comes to claim, even with irresistible authority, His undivided possession of us, His absolute mastery over us! Even my faint powers, my feeble senses, my tainted heart, my faithless soul, my cheerless words, my fruitless life—even these paltry things He eagerly owns as dear unto Him. What the world disregards, despises, contemns, casts away—that He feelingly, lovingly, takes unto Himself, cleanses pure, renders whole, exalts high and presents to the world as a miracle of His abounding grace. Unto this Supreme Lord what is it that we do not owe, that we are not, by His own eternal right, bound to proffer and surrender? All the richest possessions of life—all the noblest ideas of the mind; all the tenderest sympathies of the heart; all the finest susceptibilities of the conscience; all the manliest resolves of the will; all the sublimest aspirations of the soul; all the adoring reverences of the self, the home, the family and the race—all, all we place before His throne as His due. He is unto us both the All-giver and the All-resumer, gifting Himself unto us in love and gathering us back unto Himself as the fruit of His love. Our life springing from the fount of His eternal being,

flowing along the course of His providential prescribing, growing with the opulence of His grace and fulfilling in the infinity of His bliss—the entire process of each one's existence is ordered and guided by His Holy Spirit. The Sovereign, yet the ever-eagerly seeking, the ever—affectionately companioning God—He is never, not for a moment, apart and away from us. With the veil of ignorance before the mind, with the mists of greed around the heart, with the gloom of iniquity in the soul, I cry, 'Where is God?'. But ceaseless and tireless, His wisdom lifts the veil, His love dissolves the mists, and His holiness dispels the gloom, as His grace recovers me from the abysmal depths of abject despondence and endows me with the radiance, the glory, the transfiguration, the beatitude of His blessed presence. This God who never forgets the neglecting, never forsakes the deserting, never misses the wandering, never rejects the erring, never contemns the sinning—this dear God is the beloved, the pledged, the plighted Lord of our hearts. Him we will worship—adore and praise, with the purest, tenderest, sweetest offerings of love—love surging in praise and embracing in rapture. With the heavenly flowers of our souls' love we will worship the one only adorable God.

ARADHANA.

Om ! Satyam Jnanamanantam Brahma Ananda-roopamamritam yadvibhati Santam Sivamadwaitam Suddhamapapaviddham.

Out of transcendent infinity, through self-expressing divinity, along the process of all-unfolding providence and all-unifying harmony, unto all-sanctifying holiness, Thou art the Supreme God of Eternity. The Unmanifest emerging as the Manifest, the Manifest functioning as the Merciful, the Merciful winning as the Beautiful, the Beautiful captivating as the Adorable, the Adorable for ever enduring as the Blissful, Thou art the Supreme God of all Perfection. In truth Thou abidest for ever. In wisdom Thou knowest Thyself through eternity. In the infinity of being Thou art self-contained and all-embracing. Descending along the 'altar-stairs' of love into the abodes of peace and joy, Thou shinest as the Effulgent One, mirroring both mercy and righteousness. Thou art the Bringer of peace, the 'Nourisher of goodness, the Accomplisher of harmony. Thus embracing us all in the atmosphere of peace and goodness and into the fraternity of united worship, Thou dost always bless us with Thy holy benediction. Thus, as the God of truth ever-abiding, the God of wisdom for ever radiant,

the God of infinity for ever embracing, the God of bliss for ever enrapturing, the God of immortality for ever advancing, the God of peace for ever comforting, the God of goodness for ever cherishing, the God of unity for ever integrating, the God of holiness for ever sanctifying, Thou art All-in-all unto us. As Truth, Thou art the essence; as Wisdom, Thou art the purpose; as Infinity, Thou art the abode; as Joy, Thou art the riches; as Immortality, Thou art the glory; as Peace, Thou art the stability; as Goodness, Thou art the fulfilment; as Unity, Thou art the perfection, of our lives. And thus emerging from Thee, abiding in Thee, growing in Thee, rejoicing in Thee and rendering back unto Thee, our life becomes the chosen medium of Thy love and the favoured shrine of Thy holiness. Thus we are proved the very offspring of God, the true children of the Holy Spirit, the *atman* being ever the self-unfolding off-shoot from the *Paramatman*. Unto Thee with our duty to truth, unto Thee with our quest of wisdom, unto Thee for the fulfilment of our desires, unto Thee as the response to Thy love, unto Thee as the radiance of Thy peace, unto Thee as the fruit of Thy goodness, unto Thee as the embrace of Thy unity, unto Thee as the shrine of Thy holiness, we render

ourselves. And Thee we ardently praise and exultingly glorify. Blessed, blessed be Thy name now and for ever!

Om ! Thathsath !

HYMN—*O Nandha neegunamokaintha* (Telugu)

To worship Thee is at once the sweetest joy and the richest blessing of our lives. Thy worship—even the incoming of Thy spirit into our narrow and impure hearts—brings the cleansing, purifying and gladdening gift of Thy Divine love into us. And as we are thus cleansed, purified and gladdened by that Divine love, we turn and respond unto Thee with the irresistible longing of our hearts; and trembling yet trustful, oppressively conscious of our unworthiness but buoyed up with hope in Thy clemency, we tender unto Thee our whole life—our senses and faculties, our desires and duties, all our possessions and all our anticipations; all, all we place before Thy throne, Thou our own dear and holy God. And we implore Thee to receive those gifts, worthless in themselves but rich as proffered to Thee. Do Thou deign to accept our souls for Thy shrine, our hearts for Thy throne, our minds for Thy oracle, our limbs and organs for Thy implements, our

lives for Thy offering, and the full cycle of our existence for the home-returning of the child to the parent. With that supplication, in that hope and urged by that longing, we turn to Thee and pray to Thee to be our Guide across the vastness of life and our Goal in the realm of immortal, ineffable bliss. Blessed, blessed be Thy name !

DHYANAMU

followed by

GOSHTI CHANT.

*Asathomasadgamaya, thamasomajyothirgamaya
mrithyormamrithamgamaya, aaviraveermayedhi, Rudra,
yaththey dakshinam mukham, thenamampahinithyam.*

Lead us, we supplicate Thee, out of the untruth of the fleeting fancies of life into the truth of the real purposes of life. Lead us, we beseech Thee, out of the darkness of self-indulging passion into the light of self-donating affection. Lead us, we implore Thee, out of the death of godless drift into the immortality of God-inspired hope, love and service. Thou, the self-revealed One, do Thou reveal Thyself unto us. Thou, the dread, awe-inspiring One, even with the effulgence of Thy glorious presence do Thou for ever protect us and

sanctify us. Blessed, blessed, be Thy name now and for ever!

UPADESAMU.

Fellow-believers in the Supreme God and fellow-worshippers of the Father of all! Confiding in His Holy Spirit, I will endeavour to address to you a few simple words, frail with my many shortcomings but not unlikely through God's grace to prove a little helpful to us all in our humble endeavours to walk in the ways of the Lord.

Several of you have, of course, an idea of the genius of Emerson, that God-illuminated soul who could, within the brief compass of a short poem, present the real essence of man's trust in God and man's deepest religious experiences. If, for instance, we read his short poem to which, for a Westerner, he gives the surprising title of *Brahma* and ponder the truths it states, then, with no exaggeration we may say that a thoughtful reader can discover in it the distilled spirit of the Vedanta doctrine, and that to the West, with its scientific pursuits and humane pre-occupations, he therein disclosed the sublime verities of the deep mysticism of the East. From this stand-point, it has been reported of him—that, during his English tour, some of his friends

who found him, as they thought, incurably and unreasoningly optimistic, since he always persisted in the profession that all is good in this world, took him to Newgate Prison, filled with hundreds of criminals of all varieties, guilty of all kinds of degrading doings, and enquired, 'What do you say now? Is this a good world?' And with that deep-founded, rock-based faith of his, Emerson answers, 'Yes; the world is yet good!' The thought in his mind was akin to the noteworthy observation of another great thinker that every jail, correctly understood, humanely used and prayerfully administered, is verily a hospital for the sick soul. It is not the stone walls that indicate the purpose of a jail. The faith which, rather, is the background of a jail, is that as the criminal, wisely handled and sympathetically directed, undergoes the ordeal of imprisonment, his soul will also progress through the purgatory of penitence into the paradise of a reclaimed child of God. It was this faith that helped Emerson to see nothing dismal in the spectacle before him and to declare confidently that, not merely in spite of the jail, but even because of it, the world is, indeed, a good world—a God-fashioned and God-governed world.

Now, what is a jail the emblem of and what the lesson taught by it? It is that the human race is, by immense odds, against criminality. For, if criminality were the general trend, then, not the criminal but the man of right conduct would be segregated or incarcerated as an abnormal or an undesirable person. Every seat of justice is really a throne on which the Spirit of God is installed and from which, through the advocacy of the pleader, the confession or denial of the accused, the testimony of the witness, the opinion of the assessor and finally the insight of the judge, God pronounces the eternal dictum that this world is, after all said, designed to be a good world. We are all, at one time or another, subjected to the smart of the goading question and the distracting doubt, 'Are we, indeed, under the dispensation and guidance of a good God?' And again and again, as the agitation of the passing day subsides, as the excitement in the surface feelings at war with the deeper intuitions is lulled, as the lowering clouds are dissipated and the beaming stars once again come into view, the soul is aglow with the solemn reaffirmation, *Suvisalamidamviswam pavithram Brahmamandiram*. This wide universe is not a random conglomerate of ill-assorted contents but an ordered, articulated, harmonised cosmos—

the sacred temple of God, the consecrated sanctuary of the Holy Spirit. Let us, through a short but illuminating story which I shall presently relate, try to receive and retain in our hearts this everlasting hope that we are, for ever, in direct touch with, in the very embrace of, a good God—good because in His innermost substance He is Love itself.

Some centuries ago there lived a profound mystic, Tauler by name. As he dwelt in the City of Strasburg by the Rhine, he was haunted by the one perplexing problem of the solemn Mystery of Life: what may be its real intent; why has it been brought into existence; where can we find that peace which, if there existed a good God, ought to be the end and goal of all? With this age-long problem troubling his mind, he was having a stroll alongside of the river. He felt like one wandering in a starless night, feeling the jar of unseen waves and hearing the thunder of an unknown sea breaking along an unimagined shore. That is to say, his soul was passing through that travail of the spirit when it can neither believe nor disbelieve, when belief cannot be ratified by conviction and yet disbelief cannot prevail against intuition. In this distracted state, as he walked, he prayed the same old prayer of

a decade of torment—the groan of gnawing anguish in the heart—‘ Lord, have pity on me ; for while I pretend to lead others, I am myself blind ; vouchsafe guidance unto my groping steps ! How harrowing is the misery of the soul that others credit with wisdom and turn to with trust ; while, in its proper self, it has neither the light that guides nor the strength that sustains ! ’ As this sorrowing supplication is once again uttered, Tauler hears, drawing near, the steps of a poor, feeble, aged man supporting himself on a staff. As he comes within hearing, Tauler greets him, ‘ Peace unto thee, father ! God give thee a good day ! ’ The old man lifts up his calm blue eyes and answers, ‘ I thank thee, my son, for thy good-will. But all my days are good, and none are ill. ’ Tauler wishes him a good day, as though it is a special gift of Providence ; but the stranger avers that all his days are good. This startles Tauler. To the humble-souled believer, every day is good ; to him there is no evil day (*durdinam*), except that on which the soul fails to remember the Lord—to delight in His contemplation (*smaranam*). Thus astonished, Tauler further wishes to try the stranger and, therefore, says, ‘ God give thee happy life ! ’ The old man smiles and observes, ‘ I never am unhappy. ’ This is too much for the doubting soul of Tauler. He places

his hand upon the old man's coarse, gray sleeve and says, 'Tell me, O father, what thy strange words mean. Surely man's days are evil, and his life sad as the grave it leads to.' 'No, decisively no,' is the stranger's answer to Tauler, 'Our times are in God's hands; His daily gifts are in complete accord with our real needs. Be it shadow or sunshine, be it want or wealth, what He grants is the best for us and merits our thanks. The sole evil in our life is to miss sharing in God's holy life. And I derive and enjoy unbroken happiness from submission to His will and from trust in His Wisdom, Goodness and Power. In Him inhere the Goodness that purposes, the Wisdom that plans and the Power that accomplishes, the noble ends of our life.' The answer fills the great preacher only with dumb-stricken wonder. After a pause, the old haunting doubt surges up again, as if with the terrific form of a ghost; and Tauler hurls the question at the old man: 'How would it fare with you, should God consign you hence to Hell?' 'Be it so,' is the serene avowal. The stranger does not know what Hell is; but he knows he can never lose the presence of God. His soul is endowed with two arms—Humility and Love—Humility with which he embraces Humanity, Love with which he holds to God. So, he is always with God, inseparably

united to God ; and to him Hell and Heaven make no difference. Better Hell with God, if that could be, than Heaven without God ! Yes ; if we attain to that state of God-realisation when we can declare, ‘ Where I go, He goes ; wherever I am, He is.’—why, that is *jeevanmukti* the life beatific. All veils are rent, all knots are broken, all barriers are levelled ; and in the garden of love are seated, love-making, ‘ Thou and I,’ as Hafiz has it. This brings tears, as it could not but, into Tauler’s eyes ; and as the marvellous old man glides out of view, Tauler bows his head and exclaims that his prayer has been answered and God has sent the long-sought man of the heaven-illuminated soul, whose simple trust begets more wisdom than all the bookful-lore of the school-men could. With a new light in his eye and a new joy in his heart, Tauler enters back the City-gates. And he sees far off across the broad street a mighty shadow over the bright mid-day light. As he traces it back, he comes to the basement of a church, and running his eye along the whole length of the edifice, his view rises to the point where on its tower is placed the sun-filled crown of mid-day radiance ; and in that light he sees that it is this church, radiant at the top, that is

casting its deep shadow across the street. As he reflects on this sight, his soul receives the illuminating truth—the one truth that, reverently pondered, not only dissolves all doubt but transfigures the groping seeker into the sure seer of divine wisdom: namely, yonder tower, with mid-day radiance at the top but dark shade at the base, is a graphic symbol of man's life which, rooted in the earth but reared into the heaven, must, and cannot but, be a composite of mundane clay and celestial ray. With whatever analogue invested, in the struggle to convey the inconveyable, the truth at the core is that the human soul is a way-farer through the world and has to ascend from darkness into light: *tamasomajyothirgamaya*. 'The dust that I was He has moulded into man,' says an Urdu poet. And man's high destiny is to emerge into an angel—a being composed of undimmed light. During this emergence the soul's eye has to be trained to fix a steady glance, through the enveloping gloom, at the central gleam of guidance on every path. Hence, across the path of man lies the shadow which the great Sun of Wisdom casts thereon. It is dark below, even because there is light above. What is Providence but the peep of Purpose through the cloud

of Chance? Darkness is a foil to Light. Trust is the soul's vigil for the coming matins.

That is the story, rendered in beautiful verse by Whittier, one of the most inspired poets of America. As we intently ponder it and prayerfully receive its message, do we not feel that we are, one and all, exalted as His beloved children into the very bosom of the Holy One? Of the many priceless truths in this poem, let us, for a moment or two, dwell upon that one which is a most inspiring exemplification, in plain homely form, of the reality, the immediacy, the blessedness, of our relation to God. As the body is endowed with two arms, so is the spirit, too, gifted with two arms. With one arm, Humility, I take hold upon His dear Humanity; with the other arm, Love, I clasp His Divinity. Then, what is the human spirit but the casket, the treasure-trove, of the whole wealth of truth contained in Humanity and Divinity? After all, what constitutes the process of life may be summed up in one word: the man-ward descent of God and the God-ward ascent of man—humanity sanctified (may the word 'divinised' be risked?) even through the indwelling spirit of God: *Isavasyamidamsarvam*. This descent (*avatarana*) of Divinity into Humanity with the

return ascent,—this circle of spiritual current, transmuting and transfiguring Humanity into the mirror, the image, of Divinity—this sublime truth it is that is implied in Tennyson's profound declaration, 'On God and God-like men we build our hopes.' Again, let us think of Humility and Love as the two arms with which man is to work out his eternal destiny—that Humility which is forward to do good but shrinks to see it famed, which gives 'in the name of God' (*Allah-ke-nam-par*), forgets what it has given, and renders thanks and rejoices that it has been elected to serve ; and that Love which loves and seeks no return, which is loyal even unto death, which (moth-like) delights to be consumed by and assumed into the Beloved—Life achieved in merger into Love! Thus, and thus alone, does the eye of devout love discern the divinity in man through all veils—'through all disguise, form or place or name,' as our poet has it elsewhere in his noble apostrophe to Democracy. For unto the eye of loving faith, there is placed, on every son of man, be he never so sin-stained or self-crippled, the crown of Divine grace. Thus, and thus alone, the world we live in and the life we live in it are at once God-indwelt and God-blest; and thus alone does God rejoice in man. Oh, if only we carry with us this conviction and this consciousness wherever

we go, why, then, our life is *dhanya*. It is the conquest of the world-conqueror, the discomfiture of death—*mrityunjay*. That is Life Immortal in God: *Ne plus ultra*.

PRARDHANA and ASEESH.

Thou, the richest Possession of our lives, the sweetest Joy of our hearts! We thank Thee, we bless Thee, for having thus gathered us together into Thy holy presence and, as we humbly trust, spoken unto us Thy holy truth, which has declared our status and proclaimed our right of Divine childhood, and set up before us the heavenly ideal and aim of unbroken, ever-deepening Divine communion and companionship. Our profoundly grateful thanks we render unto Thee that Thou dost ever lead us by the hand and guide us with the light on our path. Only, oh dear God, we beseech Thee, inspire us evermore to trust our hand to Thy grasp and to fix our eye on Thy light. For, where Thou leadest, there, with all the depressing roughness and dreariness of the path, lies the pilgrimage to Eternal Love. Grant that thus living our days with the assurance of Thy presence, loving those around us with the joy of Thy companionship, and rejoicing in Thee with the certainty of the human being perfected

into the divine, we may receive even here and now all the strength of self-dedicating, self-surrendering trust and even now and here vision the glory and feel the rapture of companionship with Thee, which is the true and only heaven. Render us worthy of Thee and thus fulfil Thy purpose of love and holiness in the heart and the home of each one of us. May Thy blessing descend on all Thy children, Thy truth hold sway over all peoples and nations, Thy love be the supreme law and Thy will the sovereign behest in all the interests and occupations of this world ! And may Thy Holy Spirit be alike the testimony and the redemption unto Thine own Divine offspring ! Blessed, blessed, blessed be Thou, now and for ever !

Om ! Brahma Kripahi Kevalam !

Om ! Santhih ! Santhih ! Santhih !

Om ! Harih Om !

IX

FAMILY SERVICE

with Sermon on
GRIHADEVATIHA.

(1925)

UDBODHANA.

HYMN—*Bhajo madhuraraharinama niranthara* (Hindi)

Om Parabrahmaney namah ! The sweet name, the enrapturing name, the ecstatic name of Him who is the Supreme Joy of our souls—praised and glorified be that holy name ! To praise His name *nirantharam*—always, at all times, in all places, through all the processes of life, in the enjoyment of all the beneficent activities and all the sanctifying blessings of life ; to praise His name with head and heart, with senses and soul, all attuned to one song—this is the supreme bliss vouchsafed unto us, humble mortals, through pure grace. He who not only chastens and cleanses but sweetens and sanctifies all the interests and issues of life—He is our Beloved One, to praise whom alone is to get into the highest peace and the holiest bliss in accord with the divine purpose and destiny of the whole universe. We become united with, we

are made one with, we are wholly harmonised with, the entire order of things, only when the speech of the tongue, expressing the devotion of the soul, raises the voice of song in praise of Him. He is *Sukham* ; He is *Santhi* ; and as He enters our hearts, *sukham* and *santhi* become at once our dearest possessions. Again, as He takes His abode in our homes, that *sukham* unto which the ebbs and flows, the shadows and shines, of life cause no disturbance, becomes one with *santhi*, the supreme gift of serenity. We are here on this thrice-blessed occasion to praise and glorify our Hari. Blessed be His name that He has, after what to mortal reckoning must appear a long, long interval, once again brought us together in this dear place associated with joyous and gracious occasions of the blissful experience of worship ! To be brought here together again for that worship is itself a blessing unto us from our Hari. Hallowed be His name—the name of our ever-gracious and all-glorious Hari—that He has thus once again brought us together into the circle of a family and the embrace of a congregation ! May He, in His mercy, so shape our thoughts and desires that we may address our interests and aspirations to the sole purpose of glorifying Him and owning our debt immense of thankfulness unto Him for life and all its gifts—even

the supreme gift of the rapture of worship ! May
He attune our hearts now to this worship !

ARADHANA.

Thou adorable One ! Thou art unto us our
All-in-all. In adoring Thee, we receive alike
wisdom and strength, peace and harmony, love
and joy, righteousness and sanctity, eternal and
everlasting bliss. How can we, frail, erring,
sinning creatures, know Thee ; and, knowing, love
Thee ; and, loving, serve Thee ; and, serving,
rejoice in Thee ? Yet such is Thy besetting,
haunting, persisting presence of love that not a
moment of our lives are we left to ourselves
uncared for by Thee. Every beat of the heart
tells us that Thou art with us and within us. Every
twinkle of the stars bears witness to Thy eternal
watch over us and solicitude for us. Witnesses
numberless crowd in from all around to bear testi-
mony to Thy inexhaustible loving-kindness for one
and all of us. In how many forms and aspects
Thou presentest Thyself unto us and establishest
our vital contact with Thy Holy Spirit ! Thou
true, wise, all-inclusive One ! Thou enrapturing,
transporting One ! Thou vivifying, immortalising
One ! Thou all-permeating, all-manifesting One !
Thou ever serene and tranquil One ! Thou all-

harmonising and unifying One! Thou all-consolidating and congregating One! Thou all-purifying and all sanctifying One! Thou art near and dear unto us as all that the senses look out for, all that the mind feels after, all that the heart longs for and all that the soul hankers after. Thus Thou art unto us the God of all grace, of infinite goodness, of inexhaustible love, of immaculate holiness. We bow down before Thee and render our whole-hearted thanks unto Thee. In our individual daily life, how vividly Thy presence is brought home to us! From the first gleam of dawn to the last glow of dusk, the whole course of the sun's career is only the unquenchable glory of Thy light and the inexhaustible wealth of Thy love incessantly showering blessings innumerable upon one and all of Thy children. In every walk of life and every retreat of study, in all open activities and secluded enjoyments, we find Thee present with the smile of Thy watchful eye and the assurance of Thy companioning spirit. Every star above, every flower below, every little stir of air, every tiny whisper of speech, proclaims Thee the besetting, embracing, enrapturing, sanctifying One. And thus gloriously manifesting Thyself in the world around, Thou art so sweetly and yet

so solemnly present in the heart and soul of every one of Thy children. If nature around bears witness to Thy wisdom, foresight and goodness, the soul within sees and enjoys the vision of Thy entrancing and sanctifying beauty. Oh Thou, the everlasting and the eternally Awake, as the testimony of the universe brings home to us, how intimately present, how closely and affectionately indwelling Thou art in our hearts and souls! There we find Thee when the world is silent in sleep; there we hear Thy voice, we behold Thy presence, we are quickened by, and completely assumed into, Thy holiness, when the whole universe is submerged in the lull of stirless silence. The heart seems hushed, and thought appears arrested, by the impact of Thy spirit; and we feel ourselves as though dissolved in Thee. Thee we behold as the Spouse Divine seeking and possessing and blessing each soul amongst us. Blessed be Thy name! That Thou, the Infinite One, the Eternal One, the Perfect One, shouldst thus deign to come down and dwell in, and seek companionship with, us and desire surrender from our souls—this reveals the profound depths of Thy loving grace. Serene in silence, we bow down before Thee with the adoration of our souls. Hallowed be Thy name now and for ever!

DHANYAVADASAMARPANAMU and PRARDHANA.

Oh Thou, the God of every object and of every soul brought into being; the God of nature without and of the soul within! Thou art, likewise, the God of every family. And Thee as the Deity of the heart and of the home we desire now to worship with all the ardour and devotion of grateful hearts and reverent souls. Thou art the Home, and Thou makest the whole universe the home, of Thy children, Thy own truly begotten offspring, Thy sons and daughters, everywhere in all quarters and regions of the world. Behold this wonder of wonders! Flying up unto altitudes where breath itself is suspended, or diving into depths where life is engulfed in an unsounded abyss, or cast off into secluded retreats where the solitary soul is alone with the Alone, or drawn into multitudes where the individual is merged in the throng, we find Thee at every turn an ever-available Home unto each one of us, the moment we turn unto Thee with all the ease and confidence of life in the home. And as Thou chooseth to individualise each one of Thy children in proof of the boundless love that would make no two absolutely alike but will give to each a denoting sign to show how each soul is dear for its own sake, even as each child is dear unto the mother of many offspring,

so Thou enterest into distinctive relations with each family and markest out this particular spot or that as the home for each family through a specialising, direct application of Thy spirit to it. Thus, this home is of Thy setting up and of Thy rearing. Thou hast brought, into its special shape and size, this our home of Thy giving. Dear God, this is unto us a dear spot, a precious spot, a holy spot. As the heart and the soul within are taught to love and adore Thee as the God of love and of holiness, so dost Thou teach us to love and adore Thee as the loving and holy God of our home. Without love, the home is a dreary desert; without holiness, the home is a funereal dungeon. Love and righteousness impart to the home all its joy and all its sanctity. Thou, in Thy love and holiness, rearest each tiny little space into a dear homestead and sanctifiest each such homestead into a tender nest for the cherishing of Thy children. Oh, do Thou teach us, in Thy mercy, to look at this home with the eye of faith and perceive in Thee its indwelling love and sanctifying holiness. May we here breathe the pure air of communion with Thee, see the clear light of Thy truth and hear through all voices and accents the sweet notes of Thy goodness! May it be granted to us to realise here the

processes and the fulfilments of Thy love and holiness, even the very soil under our feet being thus rendered rich and sacred with the felt touch of that love and holiness! Thus, the home becoming a sanctuary and the heart a shrine, the soul shall adore Thee through all the hours of the day and in all the occupations of the family.

In our dear home, how Thou hast, indeed, been upbringing us all! This marvel escapes attention even by the smooth flow of life, even by the unsought yet unfailing bestowal of Thy tender mercies. How rich Thy grace, how ample Thy loving-kindness, how unwearied Thy watch, how enduring Thy protection! For all this we bow before Thee and render whole-hearted thanks unto Thee. Generation succeeding generation and all knit into the wreath of one family through the devotion of Thy infusing, Thou makest the life of this home a gift of Divine grace. As we recall the times that have gone by and glance at them even with the passing peep of our dim sight, we see how, not today or yesterday alone but through generations, Thy purpose has been realising itself in this home. For this we render our devoutest thanks unto Thee. In our own day, how rich and precious has been the casket of Thy loving mercies

unto us ! Oh God, have we the insight penetrating enough to appraise the wealth of these mercies ? Why, how should it be possible for us even to live and stir but for Thy own kindness ? In each one of us Thou hast made Thyself vividly manifest as the living, loving Care-taker, all our days. And as Thy merciful design to make the family manifold has been disclosed, time and again, we have paused to appreciate, and to render grateful thanks for Thy increasing love. Yet, how often, we have, rather, taken it all as a matter of course, not as a special ordinance of Thine ! For all our backslidings we implore Thy pardon. Even now, as Thou awakenest in us this sense of the ingrate indifference of the past, it is Thy own grace moving us to acknowledge the irredeemable debt we owe for Thy loving-kindness. For the repeated blessing of each one rendered dear by all the ties and tendrils of love and affection, we render whole-hearted thanks unto Thee. As we cast back our thoughts, how the mind is crowded with absorbing and enrapturing memories of Thy loving-kindness in and through the multiplication of these objects of affection for us ! Even in the mass, did we but note, could we just recollect, recall and relate these untold mercies, how impressive and, truly, how divinely inspiring

should become this tale about each one of us ! As Thou keepest company with us and unfoldest the marvels of Nature before the eye in all regions, so the sights seen, the fellowships enjoyed, the reflections pondered and the experiences assimilated in this dear home—do they not make us feel that our God has been with us at every step and in all circumstances ? Dear God, how Thou hast made it impossible for us to fall into the delusion that Thou art a far-off God, an absentee God, a detached God ! Aye, once for all, we would declare how Thou art our near, our ever-available, our all-embracing God. Blessed be Thy name ! It is not that Thou takest us together through the life of the body alone ; but Thou keepest with us through the pilgrimage of the soul—not mere travels over space and time, but companionship and communion in spirit. For this we render reverent thanks unto Thee. The same yet wonderfully varied life that Thou settest forth before us here in an interminable procession of wisdom, goodness and glory, is a veritable gospel and ministration unto us. For man mingling his aspirations with the processess of Nature and evolving out of her material the marvels of truth and love and beauty, *sathyam, sivam, sundaram*; for this glorious contribution of the human spirit trained and perfected by

the Divine, we render our whole-hearted thanks unto Thee. With the horizon expanded and the outlook widened, how dare the mind remain narrow and how can the heart rest content with lowly interests? With the visions and manifestations of Thy goodness, our own sympathies must enlarge and our souls must soar high and our life itself must grow purer and richer, holier and happier. For this supreme opportunity of larger life even in this little home, we render whole-hearted thanks unto Thee. For perils real seasonably warded off, dangers imminent completely overcome, risks for error and mistake graciously prevented and occasions for companionship and communion bountifully multiplied, new truths and aspirations lovingly passed into the mind and the heart at every turn, it being again and again brought home to us that East and West are only men's divisions, while both are really wings of the same sacred mansion of our God—for this enlargement of soul under this roof, we render our grateful thanks unto Thee. May this home be hereafter unto us a home enlarged and sanctified with all the intensity of the felt experience of Thee and of enjoyed companionship with Thy spirit! Grant that we may remember always how the

home is to be viewed, not with the eye of flesh, but with the vision of the soul. Make us worthy of Thy gift unto the sacred end of pilgrimage into higher truths and holier visions. We render Thee our hearts' profoundest thanks that Thou hast brought this dear family, thus far hale and happy, into the midst of its soul's kith and kin. May this sentiment dwell in the hearts of one and all here; and may ours be the thrilling joy of the assurance that there is such a store of love amongst us; and with it may we also feel the eager solicitude born of the sense that love demands love in return! Vouchsafe that we enter on a fresh page in the holy book of life and character in this home with a new resolve and a new dedication. Even as the reminiscences of the past are meant to be unifying links for closer cohesion and sweeter harmony, may they all serve to make us more intently and intimately one in Thee—one congregation loving and adoring Thee for ever! Oh Thou, the great God of all families! Seated here, not on the bare earth, but even on Thy maternal lap, we implore Thee to vouchsafe Thy blessing unto all those that hold this dear home an object of love unto their hearts and, through Thy grace, find in it all the

happiness of pure affection. On this solemn occasion, we beseech, too, Thy blessing upon every other homestead; which we would pray Thee thus to make a truly blessed spot under the sun. Be Thou glorified in the home, as in the heart, as ever our own *Grihadevatha* and *Ishtadevatha*! Blessed, blessed be Thy name now and for ever!

Om! Brahma Kripahi Kevalam!

Om! Santhih! Santhih! Santhih!

Om! Harih Om!

**PRAYERS
AND
MEDITATIONS.**

I
BHAI, ALLAH HAI
(1931)

Thou, the Supreme, All-witnessing and All-clement God! My heart throbs and aches on this pathetic occasion, as I am constrained to feel, to be afflicted with the oppressive consciousness of, the contrast—the excruciating contrast—between what Thy goodness prompts these dear ones to imagine of me and what Thy grace urges me to own, of myself. Yet Thine all-embracing Holy Spirit does clearly disclose the truth that between their generous appreciation and my tortured self-condemnation Thou standest as the harmonising Revealer. They think that I know something of Thy reality; they are pleased to say that I possess Thee to some extent. But, alas ! I am grieved I know Thee not; I am anguished with my utter privation of Thee. And yet the basic truth, the fundamental fact, is that, though I know Thee not, Thou knowest me and the all-permeating self-

* Closing prayer after *Usha Keerthan* on sixty-ninth Birthday at Pithapuram, (20-10-'31).

expression of Thyself seems to indwell me too. I cannot pretend to possess Thee. But I must witness, from the very centre of my grateful heart, to the fact that Thou dost always possess me. On this occasion, how can I be forgetful—is it not simply impossible to lose sight, is it not against nature itself to drop out of memory and assume to be unaware—of what has been the unbroken continuity of the scheme of my life: namely, that as I have been taught by Thy grace to interpret it, even before I was brought to see the light of the world Thou didst start Thy own plan of my life; the one signal feature of which has been that Thou wouldst, through all the vicissitudes of failure and discomfiture, neglect and slight, temptation and transgression, others' apathy and my perversity, others' heedlessness and my ungratefulness, sustain the continuity of Thy providential protection? Were it not for Thy parental watch and care even before I could be brought into the outer world, I should have been wiped out of existence. When placed in this arena of seeming clash and conflict, Thou didst not only hold me by the hand divine but bear me in the arms heavenly, making unmerited, unsolicited mercy the very cradle of my

being. And through the whole process of these years now taking up the last unit to complete the seventh decade, the one impressive conviction has been borne in upon me that Thou dost possess me for Thy own purpose, all through mere, pure grace. I implore Thee on this solemn occasion to drive this conviction deeper and still deeper into my soul. I need more and more the strength of this conviction to sustain me and carry me on. I am naught, nothing but a mere phantom of appearance to which Thou, in Thy infinite mercy, choosest to give substance and reality. To ignore Thee as the Substance and to set myself up as more than the shadow—that is the tragedy of my life. Thou alone canst save me from this ruinous delusion of life. Thy light is clear, steady, un-failing. Only the scales on the eye, the mist around the mind and, more than all, the darkness in the soul—these not only dim or blur the vision but seem to change the light itself into gloom. My prayer unto Thee on this particular occasion, again and again, is: Deeper and ever deeper grow in me the conviction that I am known unto Thee, not forgotten of Thee, ever kept in view by

Thee, evermore watched and cared for by Thee, and that Thou dost possess me, wilt never drop me out, on no account slacken Thy motherly embrace of me. This shall be my strength for duty and my preparedness for beatitude. Then duty shall be doing the will, and salvation enjoying the bliss, of my God. I forget Thee, but Thou dost remember me; I feel solitary and deserted, but Thou art ever companioning me. Man cannot give me this assurance; he can only bear witness to it. To generate it in me is Thy own prerogative, Thy sole, sovereign right. As I bow before Thee, why should I confess what Thou knowest beyond the bitterest expressions of my contrition—that I have been hopelessly, pitiably, lamentably unworthy of Thy mercy and Thy compassion? The body Thou wouldst indwell; but I have weakened and wasted it and made it unworthy of Thee. The mind Thou wouldst illumine; but I have so darkened it with deliberate egotism that light cannot freely enter it. The conscience Thou wouldst exalt; but I have so burdened it with the dead weight of my disloyalty to truth and right that it cannot be easily lifted up. Thou wouldst pour pure love into my heart; but it is brimful of impure pas-

sions that deny Thee. Thou wouldst make my soul Thy sanctuary—the very shrine of Thy Holy Spirit; but I have set up on the altar such ghastly and such beastly idols to desecrate it woefully. I have, thus, left no ingress, no nook, for Thy entrance and for Thy abode. But such is the perennial persistence of Thy loving concern in me that, not by replacement but by transformation, Thou overcomest and appropriatest unto Thyself even all the frailties and transgressions and obstructions that abound in me. The dead idols Thou dost kindle into living ideals and aspirations. The base passions Thou dost transmute into graceful amenities and self-sacrificing activities. The gloom of egotism Thou dost illumine into the light of self-reverence. And the frailty of the flesh Thou dost shape into the strength of peace and patience. Thus, Thou comest in as the Revivifier, the Reinvigorator, the Reilluminator and the Redeemer, and assumest into Thyself all my uselessness, worthlessness and even baseness, and, by the alchemy of grace, fusest them into miraculous adaptation to Thy holy purpose of universal redemption and sanctification. Even as, through the pervasiveness of Thy providence, man-condemned filth becomes

strength-imparting manure and the manure becomes life-enriching sap and the sap becomes soul-gladdening flower, so my very iniquities and abominations are all caught up in the all-purifying purpose of Thy Holy Spirit and rendered so beneficent that even in the confessions of sin is glimpsed the beam of Thy returning grace and even through the tears of penitence sparkles the radiance of Thy redeeming holiness.

On this day and at this hour, my humble, whole-hearted supplication, once more, is this: Strengthen, deepen and, as it may please Thee, fulfil in me the slender faith that Thou knowest me, that Thou possessest me, that I am always and everywhere, at every moment and at every step, not only in Thy keeping but under Thy inspiration and guidance. Touch, I beseech Thee, with the truth and the reality of Thy sanctifying presence every sense and organ, faculty and power, now abused or unused, that they might all be awakened to a new thirst for Thy truth and a new hunger for Thy sanctity and a new love for Thy children. Grant that this be a day of fresh start and of new departure even, along the all-permeating and all-vivi-

fying consciousness that Thou art the Truth, the Reality and the world is but the emblem, the expression, the manifestation of Thy Truth and Reality. If I had Truth with me, Reality in my soul, how blessed, indeed, I should be! No doubt, it is there; alas, I do not see it! It for ever exists there; woe is me that I am not aware of it! Awake in me the vivid sense of Thy benignant presence. Who am I that I should, by my poor self, hope and aspire to sympathise and energise? I do not presume to think of it. Only grant this one supreme gift—to be able to say, in the words of the thrilling fervour of a God-intoxicated devotee, '*Bhai, Allah hai!*' (Brother, God is!). Could I utter that with the confidence of felt experience, with the assurance of realised enjoyment and the certainty of visioned glory, I should be blessed beyond measure. '*Bhai, Allah Hai!*' that is the sum and substance, the fruition and consummation, of all revelation, of all dispensation. We are nothing, but God is; and therein lies the basis and the bliss of our being. When troubles come, God is! When trials besiege, God is! When temptations assail, God is! When passions rage, God is! When riches fail and poverty oppresses, God is! When sickness tor-

tures, God is! When war slaughters, God is! When pestilence devastates, God is! When harvests wither and man starves, God is! Again, when bounty showers, God is! When beauty gladdens, God is! When health vivifies, God is! When knowledge illumines, God is! When conscience guides, God is! When love embraces, God is! When worship sanctifies, God is! '*Bhai, Allah Hai!*'—may this be the one dominant note of the whole gamut of my being, and out of that single note be struck the full symphony of a rich and righteously lived life! Grant unto me again and again to turn, not with the finger but with the soul, the rosary of this one truth and this only joy—'*Bhai, Allah Hai!*'. May I tell myself more than I utter forth to others, '*Allah Hai!*' Such is the attunement of the spirit within to the world without that if this truth vibrated within, the whole creation would join in chorus and swell the hosanna; from the grovelling worm to the soaring soul, all, all—the countless denizens of the world—would unite in the universal hallelujah, '*Bhai, Allah Hai!*' Wilt Thou grant it to me from this day to harp upon the strings of my whole being the sweet, sacred note of '*Bhai, Allah Hai!*'? Then the

new year unto me shall be a new year truly. Then I shall have come into the richest heritage provided for Thy children, owning Thee as the Universal Parent, and in Thee receiving and embracing all as sisters and brothers. ‘*Bhai, Allah Hai!*’ ‘*Bhai, Allah Hai!*’. Blessed be Thy name even for this revelation, this cheering promise of realisation!

Om! Brahma Kripahi Kevalam!

Om! Santhih! Santhih! Santhih!

Om! Harih Om!

II

PITHANOSI PITHANO BODHI.

(1929)

Om! Pithanosi pithano bodhi; namasthesthu.

Thou art our Father. Thou dost teach us. Thou dost train us. Thou dost guide us. Thou dost for ever take us along the straight and narrow path—the ever-ascending and ever-extending path of truth, love and holiness. Thou art not only our unerring Guide but also our unfailing Companion. But for Thy guiding light and sustaining grace, how errant, how perplexed, how helpless, we should be! But being Thy children, we are for ever in Thy care, in Thy charge. Literally, like unto a mother, Thou holdest us by the hand, takest us along the path to perfection in truth, love and holiness, even as Thou alone hast brought us into being. This re-birth, this transfiguration, of the soul in the Holy Spirit, Thou hast assumed to Thyself as Thy purpose and Thy pleasure in each one of us. How strikingly differ-

* Opening prayer at a *sangat* in Pithapuram (8-12-'29).

ent amongst ourselves we are in aims and aspirations, in capacity and endeavour! And yet such is Thy marvellous mercy, Thy miraculous grace, that Thou suitest Thyself to each one of us. There is no mind so ignorant that Thou dost not personally illumine it with light. There is no heart so selfish that Thou dost not directly touch it with love. There is no conscience so dull that Thou dost not intensely quicken it with the sense of the right. There is no soul so grovelling in worldliness that Thou dost not uplift it into the might of truth, love and righteousness. There is no home so self-centred that Thou dost not move it to some neighbourly sympathy and attachment. Indeed, even below the plane of human nature, instinct of Thy prompting worketh wonders in pursuing what is safe, receiving what is wholesome, rejecting what is injurious. But in man, Thou workest, in Thy wisdom, by the rule of reason and judgment made clear and certain by the light of inspiration and rendered absolutely obligatory by the command, of right and righteousness. For thus lifting us above the animal into the human and thereafter elevating us from the human into the divine, we render our grateful thanks unto Thee, as we owe it all

to Thy mercy and Thy grace. How invariably and unfailingly Thou dost keep company with us for the sole purpose of growing us nearer and nearer to the full, clear sense and understanding of the eternal purpose, of our lives as they are shaped, moulded and employed by Thee for Thy Divine ends! Thus Thou dost help us to outlive the base and evoke the noble in us. Our ardent love for Thee, our fervent devotion to Thee, our utter surrender unto Thee, our abounding joy in Thee—they grow limitlessly and equip us both to do the right and to rejoice in the righteous. And an increasingly vivid aliveness to the direct and enduring urge of Thy holy being as the vital force at the core of our existence—this is worship; and this worship Thou hast meant for us, and Thou dost desire of us, entirely for the purpose of bringing us into the sublime and blissful state of complete identification with Thee over the whole scope of life. Thou hast, by working through countless ages and by employing numberless witnesses, disclosed to us, in increasing fulness, how this worship means life lived in, and love rendered unto, and bliss enjoyed with, Thee as the indwelling, vitalising Soul of the whole creation. Into this true worship, which

alone means full, perfect, blissful life, Thou art leading us day after day, year after year, age after age.

Oh Thou all-illuminating and all-sanctifying God, do Thou vouchsafe unto us now and here, more than ever before, the joyful consciousness, the blissful experience, of the reality, the strength and the sanctity of worship. We humbly and trustfully place ourselves in Thy hands, fully knowing and believing that Thy guidance will be granted unto us. Teach us; and develop us into Thy reverent worshippers. Blessed be Thy name now and for ever!

Om! Thath Sath!

III

INTER-RELIGIOUS CONFERENCE

BENEDICTION*

(1930)

Om Pithanosi! Thou art our *Pitha*, our Father. And within that one word, *Pitha*, is summed up all the immense treasure, all the illimitable, inexhaustible wealth, of Thy divine love unto us. *Pithanosi*: Thou art our Father. And as we utter that sweet, sacred, sanctifying word, *Pitha*, we feel unspeakably hallowed, exalted and blessed. For vouchsafing this supreme privilege unto us, worms of the dust, we thank Thee. And yet, Oh Thou Supreme Creator and All-encompassing Perfecter of the universe, how can we adequately thank Thee for vouchsafing this golden opportunity of addressing Thee as *Pitha*? How our hearts thrill and swell with thankfulness as we salute Thee as our *Pitha*! Thine is the hand, the loving, bountiful hand, the tender, nurturing hand, that feedeth, with the heavenly manna of Truth,

* At the close of a session at the Goutamn Lodge, Cocanada (4-11-'30).

each soul here and all of us; and for this inestimable bounty we render our whole-hearted thanks unto Thee. All that the body needs, all that the mind wants, all that the heart requires, all that the soul hungers for—all this Thou dost perennially and stintlessly provide for us. Do Thou accept our humble and reverent thanks and salutations!

As, at the spreading out of the feast, the expectant heart thanks the benevolent heart that has afforded it, so we feel the sense of our immense indebtedness to Thee at the close of this intensely enjoyed feast of the soul. We that turned to Thee in expectation at the beginning, we turn to Thee again with gratification at the close, and renew our thanks for having out of Thy boundless hospitality provided this rich banquet unto our spirits. For the hearts moved, for the souls inspired, for the gatherings edified, by Thee, we render our thanks over again. The very atmosphere is cheered and illumined with the spirit of Thy presence. Beloved One, Revered One, Adored One, on this solemn and happy occasion we feel we are the children of one family, the offspring of one bosom, a fraternity in one embrace, parti-

icipating in the ineffable happiness of conjoint worship. Vain shall not go, by Thy grace, this opportunity, vouchsafed by Thyself, of our understanding how Thou art the God of dispensations and how in the vast fold of Thy dispensations man to man shall ever dwell together in peace and in love. As Thou hast implanted the desire, so wilt Thou grant the fulfilment. May we be urged on by the beneficent experiences of this fellowship now drawing to a close, so that in our hearts and lives may be borne the witness and testimony unto the wondrous workings of Thy grace! Blessed be Thou, as, from the bounty Thou hast so richly imparted now, we feel assured that Thou shalt vouchsafe such blessings furthermore hereafter! And even by the multiplication of such instances of Thy benignant, unifying grace, may we be drawn together towards one another and bless Thee as our one, Parent, Protector and Saviour!

Om! Santhih! Santhih! Santhih!

Om! Harih Om!

IV

BIRTH-DAY FAMILY THANKSGIVING.*

(1924)

Hymn—*Anandamrita namah* (Sanskrit)

Om! Anandamrita namah! Our reverent salutations to the God of Immortal Love! Thou Supreme One, Thou art truly and verily our own dear God. Vastness cannot **confine Thee**. Yet Thou, of Thine illimitable mercy, enshrinest Thyself in our hearts. Thought baffled, imagination exhausted, Thou art, all the same, found within the embrace of love. Thus Thou art our own dear God. Blessed be Thy name! Experiencing with every beat of the heart, with every wink of the eye, with every wave of the hand, with every word of the tongue, and at every pore of the frame, the intense, immediate, endearing presence of Thy living, loving Spirit, we feel we are all-engrossed, altogether overwhelmed, with this encircling vision of Thy Spirit. Yet this is what Thou alone ordainest;

* At the Pithapuram Palace, on the fourteenth birthday of the Senior Maharajkumar (15-10-1924).

and we accept this tender pressure as Thy our hope into this lovely form before our own embrace. As we are met here, oh Thou dear, dear God, how the memory becomes vocal with the story of Thy love! Yes, counted out through years and months, days and hours, the memory calls back, with grateful vividness, eager hope and cherished love rich with the experience of sweet joy and yet, at times, tremulous with the throb of anxious suspense. For this witness that we carry within us of Thy mercy we render our whole-hearted thanks unto Thee. Thou art boundless in Thy mercy; and yet we feel no gift even of Thy illimitable mercy is so rich with Thine own love as this gift which shapes eyes and awakens the ardent prayer of trust and confidence in our souls. Even the very physical embodiment in which Thou encasest this loving gift—how it proves the image of Thy Mercy! As the sweet little one placed in the arms or on the bosom, brought in by Thy love, tendered by Thy love, cherished with Thy love—as this dear darling has grown in body, mind, heart and soul, he has been truly and verily a vision of Thy wisdom and an evangel of Thy love. Also, for all these other tokens of Thy grace that have come to us from time

to time after him, we render our whole-hearted thanks unto Thee. It is of the inner core of Thy wisdom, the very essence of Thy love, that Thou deignest thus to take man into Thy confidence and to employ him to subserve Thy eternal purposes of holiness. And even us, poor, frail, erring creatures, Thou hast honoured with the solemn office, the sacred duty, of receiving, praying over, waiting on, cherishing, caressing and companioning Thy gifts, and also of rendering them over again to Thy own care and keeping. For this rich blessing, for this lofty responsibility, we render our whole-hearted thanks unto Thee. What are we—weak, fragile, altogether unworthy creatures—what are we that Thou shouldst exalt us to this honoured position? It is wholly because Thou alone art the guarantee, the security, of the fulfilment of the future destiny, the final aim and purpose, of these lives that we dare receive gifts at Thy hand—gifts really too mysterious for our weak sight, too dear for our poor hearts, too sacred for our lowly spirits. Yet these gifts Thou hast steadily and increasingly unfolded before our eyes, that we might see Thy grace in and through these darlings. For this we render our whole-hearted thanks

unto Thee. The floor musical with his footstep, every chamber resonant with his voice, every place from the centre to the outermost limits of the house aglow with the light of hope in his beaming eye, this, the cherished one of this auspicious day, has been truly and verily a messenger of Thy mercy, a herald of Thy holiness. And as he has grown in every faculty, with the powers invigorating themselves and the tastes and aptitudes unfolding themselves, we have alternatively experienced joy from the expansion and eagerness for the final fulfilment. For the joy we render our whole-hearted thanks unto Thee. And in the eagerness we turn to Thee and supplicate the strength of Thy assurance. Now he comes to a stage and enters on a period highly critical yet richly promising, which, to our humble human thought, needs and demands Thy closest interest, nearest presence, directest touch, and clearest guidance. We humbly trust and devoutly pray that this child be a blessing unto all, the light of the house, the joy of the parents, the stay of the dependents, the comfort of those around and about and the glory of his Maker. Exceedingly great is the responsibility, which Thou hast reposed on

him. Do Thou square his strength to that responsibility! May he appreciate the worth and dignity of his position and consecrate himself, body, mind, heart and soul, to that lofty and far-reaching destiny which Thou hast designed for him! Unto us is given nothing but to pray and supplicate. What are we that we should undertake the office of rearing him and guiding him? Yet our very prayer is our pledge unto Thee that we are wholly at Thy service for him. Our whole life is consecrated unto this solemn duty unto Thy glory. We are frail—our vision dim, our will weak, our spirit ungodly. Yet as it is Thy gift unto us, we supplicate Thy grace upon it. Do thou, as we are confident Thou wilt, mark, guide and sustain his path even with Thy light and Thy strength, that this darling may thus manifest Thine own wisdom, goodness and holiness. Likewise, we supplicate that full measure of faith and hope which Thou alone canst impart to the prayerful parents, that they might feel themselves participators in Thy providence in thus being ordained to serve Thee through this dear darling. With bodies nerved, minds brightened, hearts sweetened and souls sanctified by the grace of Thy vouchsafing, may they, with patient watch and pious trust, ever

stand by and about him, behind and ahead, rendering him, who has been Thy gift unto them, their gift unto Thee in return! And the other dear darlings that have come to make their demand on his fraternal attachment and to enjoy their share in the love and devotion of the parents—may they cling to him and grow after him, that thus they all may form one brilliant constellation of shining, cheering stars, shedding their combined lustre upon and around this House! Again, with hearts bounding with gratitude we would praise and glorify Thee on this occasion for all these dear ones whom Thou hast gifted with a father and a mother to call them their own. Therein Thou hast exalted them by endearing the destitute unto their hearts, and thus Thou hast exalted Thyself in the adoring hearts of us all. We beseech Thee, bless that 'Home' which is only the other wing of this Home, with all the abundance of Thy mercy, that, for generations to come, from this honoured House of Pithapuram there may go forth the strong influences of ministering love, and all may turn to this House with cordial greetings of benediction. Thou, in Thy wisdom and goodness, hast taught us to feel wholly at home in this Home; and for

this we render our whole-hearted thanks unto Thee. With grace within and joy around, we once again sing Thee and praise Thee: *Anandamritha namah*. Thou art the *Anandam* of the soul and of the home, the pure, spotless *Anandam* that embraces Wisdom in all its profundity, Love in all its immensity and Holiness in all its sanctity. Blessed, blessed be Thy name, now and for ever!

Om! Ekamevadwitheeyam!
Om! Brahama Kripahi Kevalam!
Om! Santhi! Santhi! Santhi!
Harih Om!
Om!

V

THE REGENERATING GOD.

(1930)

Our beloved, revered, adored God! Thou art our All-in-All; and as Thou hast been, so Thou art, always and every where with us. Thou art the unfailing Presence—the constant Companion and tireless Care-taker. By the sacred contact of Thy spirit—by the vision of Thy Truth, by the strength of Thy love and by the ecstasy of Thy beauty, Thou doest provide all our needs and satisfy all our aspirations, as Thou sanctifiest every relation and every occupation of our lives with Thy holiness. It is Thy self-revelation that makes manifest to us alike the purpose and the pleasure, the destiny and the delight, of our lives. As we come here together, it is with yearning hearts and hungering souls that we approach Thee with the prayer and the hope that, with all a parent's tenderness, Thou wilt nourish us with Truth, Love and Righteousness.

* Opening prayer at a *sangat* in Pithapuram (5-1-'30).

Vouchsafe unto us the heavenly grace that while here we be quickened and enraptured by the felt and enjoyed presence of our Divine Author and Saviour. . Thou hast created in us this yearning, this insatiable thirst, for Thee. Thou alone canst satisfy this restless, anguishing desire of our souls to come into intimate and delightful relations with Thee in love and adoration.

Thou, All-illuminating One, our darkness cannot eclipse Thy light, our weakness cannot defeat Thy strength, our callousness cannot ignore Thy solicitude, our heartlessness cannot frustrate Thy love. . Grant it, in Thy mercy, that we grow into Thy joyful, jubilant adorers and devotees in thought, word and deed. Vouchsafe to us, even with the soul-deep inspiration of Thine own holy presence and Thine own Divine love, the enchanting, the exhilarating, the enrapturing communion with Thee in love, devotion and service. Bless us, we beseech Thee, by receiving our homage and by turning Thy face of love and grace towards these hungering and yearning souls. May we, as we come into this little gathering of suppliants this day, feel that Thou hast been with us; that Thou

hast imparted Thy truth and joy unto us; that
Thou hast strengthened and sanctified our souls
afresh!

Blessed be Thy name for ever and ever!

VI
BIRTH-DAY THANKSGIVING.
(1924)

Hymn—*Enthati karunyudey Paramatmudu*
(Telugu)

Thou the Supreme One, Thou the *Paramatman*, Thou the all-pervading, all-compassing, all-transcending Holy Spirit, before Thy supremacy, at the foot-stool of Thy majesty, this humble, grateful, this poor, penitent, this submissive, supplicating, this self-surrendered, adoring soul prostrates itself. The brimful heart, the throbbing heart, the heart convulsed with conflicting feelings—what can it do but only exclaim and ejaculate, *Enthati karunyudey Paramatmudu*? How mercifully, with what incalculable wealth of mercy, with what immeasurable abundance of mercy, with what inexhaustible plenitude of mercy, Thou dost relate Thyself with, and come to dwell in, each one of Thy creatures! Oh Thou All-merciful One,

* After *Ushakkeertan* on sixty-second birthday (6-10-'24).

the past twelvemonth is the witness unto Thy mercy—the mercy that brings the comfort of trust, the peace of faith, the stimulus of hope, the strength of fellowship, the joy of communion, the sanctity of self-surrender. How rich, abundantly rich, with this mercy, the past twelvemonth now construes, and commends itself! Not in the striking and impressive incidents alone but in the smooth and even routine of life, from the first gleam of the dawn of an in-coming year to the last glimpse of the close of an out-going year, through every individual minute and moment, Thou hast been merciful. Mercy is Thy name; Thy natural expression, Thy inner essence, Thy vital self is mercy. *Karunamaya*, every tissue and nerve, every pore and particle of the body, proclaimeth Thee the Merciful One. In the calm of health, in the spasm of suffering, in the even functioning of limb and organ, in the arrested flow of the peaceful course of life, alike in the delights and in the ordeals of physical existence, Thou art merciful. And as age creeps in and feebleness gains, Thy mercy becomes all the more unmistakably manifest. To the bedimmed eye Thou providest the glass; to the shaking arm Thou suppliest the staff; to the

faltering limb Thou impartest caution; to the weakened heart Thou furnishest the cordial. Relish withdrawn but contentment induced, physical pleasure reduced but physical satisfaction enhanced—this is the balancing of the benefits of Thy mercy; and for this ordering of mercy, blessed be Thy name! Likewise and inestimably more so, how abundantly manifest is Thy providential mercy in the adjustments of the mental faculties, the moral powers and the spiritual vitalities! With the memory weakened and the thought enfeebled, yet with reminiscence haunting and reflection deepening, with eagerness declining yet with experience growing, Thou dost evenly square up the losses and the gains of the inner self. And as Thou hast designed even the humblest of Thy children to be the pilgrim of eternity, ever advancing towards the goal of immortality, necessarily yet designedly Thou dost withdraw from the eye of physical sight the familiar forms endeared by continued companionship. But as Thou dost sever those ties, Thou dost sharpen the eye of faith to peer through the veil of death into the realities of the life eternal, and thus Thou dost transmute the shock of bereavement into a stimulus for spiritual hope. For all this I

bow down before Thee in profound thankfulness. Cased in the physical body, the spirit cannot but travail as the exceptional or the unforeseen happens; yet the travail Thou dost change even into the birth-throe of a new assurance; as, even in the experience of the humblest of Thy devotees, what is withdrawn from the eye of flesh is restored to the heart of **grace**, and what is veiled behind the seen is made manifest in the unseen. And even as autumn with its denudations and winter with its mists are but the foreshadowing harbingers, the proclaiming heralds, of the coming spring, even so the autumn of age and the winter of decline disclose themselves unto the spirit as the precursive hints of the spring of that deathless life when the flower that seems to have faded here blooms afresh as the amaranth in the newer, higher region. And now with the renewed assurance to the heart that the dear ones gone before are there nestled and embraced in Thy bosom, I once again perceive Thy mercy and avow, 'Blessed be the Merciful One!' As the tree withered has really translated itself into the grove around, though the wood-cutter might fancy that it has dried up into mere fuel; even so, while the physical

body is consigned to dust, it is granted to the spirit to be revived and perpetuated in the kindred souls around. Thus is evidenced once again, unto the eye and the heart, even Thine own unfailing and inexhaustible mercy. Why is it that Thou dost fetch the year full round and wouldst not end it with an abrupt stop? Is it not to disclose how in concentric rings the cycle of life is designed to be carried to completion and perfection, continuously to spread out in enlarging circles of minutes and days, weeks and years? It is a pre-eminently human—characteristic, not of the physical creation, but of the spiritual offspring of the Holy Spirit, thus to mark and appreciate and render thanks for each of these stages and landmarks of life. And thus, on this day I bow down—we all bow down—before Thy presence in grateful adoration of Thy providence. As the sun rises upon a new day and a new year out of the old—old with reminiscence, new with resuscitation; old with thankful resignation, new with hopeful self-dedication—the lowly soul crosses the threshold of the future with the self-surrender of faith and the assurance of hope that Thy light will surely be shed upon the path, Thy strength imparted unto the heart and Thy pur-

pose fulfilled in the life—all, all as an occasion for glorifying Thee and praising Thy name again and again. Thus with the increased experience of one year, even this giddy, recalcitrant child places the hand of trust in Thine own Divine hand, with the reinforced assurance that Thy 'kindly light' shall surely 'lead' it on. Thou dost not merely go ahead but also keep abreast—foresight marching in advance and insight keeping company, wisdom guiding and affection bracing. Grant, in Thy measureless mercy, that thus I, too, may feel and see that the path trodden with the Mother, never so rugged to the foot, is ever the path of peace and happiness unto the spirit. Oh, may each footstep be the proof and the print of the Mother's unfailing companionship! Thus thanks, obeisance, hopeful self-surrender rendered unto Thee, the new portal is crossed and the fresh march is begun with the benediction of Thy presence and the strength of Thy protection. Blessed, blessed be Thy name even for this rich boon, this precious gift, of Thy encircling mercy breathing through the many bosoms and beaming through the many eyes of these dear, dear ones whom Thy affection alone could gather so sweetly close to me! And as

this constitutes the blessed compact of the Holy Spirit, oh may it thrive and grow from grace to grace—pure, peaceful, happy, all, all tending to Thy glory! Bless, I humbly supplicate Thee—albeit the sinner's supplication—, yet what supplication at Thy footstool stands a surer chance of winning Thy compassionate ear?—bless, for it is the petition of the supplicating sinner, bless each one of these dear ones—youth growing into vigour and age into maturity, and all received into the Kingdom of God. Grant—aye, even now the spirit doth feel certain and assured that Thou wilt deign to grant—once again, the ever-dear prayer, 'Let Thy mercy alone prevail, as Thy mercy alone availeth!'

Om! Brahma Kripahi Kevalam!

Om! Santhih! Santhih! Santhih!

Om! Harih Om!

VII
BRAHMIC UNITY.*
(1928)

This fervent plea for 'Unity,' on the inspiring occasion of the Centenary, as it seeks to evoke the sweet spirit of heart-union, of soul-kinship, without vetoing varieties of thought and of method, ought to elicit a response from every heart quickened by Hope and every soul illumined by Faith. The mission of religion—of vital experience as against fossil formula—is to 're-bind' those sundered by ignorance or passion. The gospel of a true Seer is Peace; the message of a true Prophet is Goodwill. Unto the Seers and Prophets of the Brahma Samaj is entrusted the special commission to proclaim this gospel and to deliver this message. In Dispensations of an elder day, the ideal was to weld all into one Belief; in this Dispensation of our day, the ideal is to string diverse faiths into one Harmony. It is the dif-

* Foreword to a Love-Offering for the Brahma Samaj Centenary from Principal Dr. V. Ramakrishna Rao, M.A., L.T., Ph.D

ference, so to speak, between the two mathematical symbols—bracket and vinculum; the former enclosing and circumscribing, the latter over-arching and in-gathering. It is to worship with the Earth as Altar and the Firmament as Canopy. It is to honour, in heart and soul, the truth of our first principle—*Suvisalamidam viswam pavitram Brahmamandiram*. It is to embrace in one ‘Jagannath’ reunion the whole race and the entire cosmos. What may worshippers in this Temple-home form but a fraternity?

VIII

A BIRTH-DAY SUPPLICATION

(1931)

— —

For this beloved one to rejoice in whom we are here before Thee once again with praise and thanksgiving, our devoutest prayer is that Thou mayst make his heart Thy home. Even to our poor understanding Thou hast made plain, in what he says and what he does, that his heart is being shaped into a home of his God. Father, may our understanding of it be the reflection of Thy revelation! Vouchsafe that, in purity of desire, in nobility of sentiment, in expanse of outlook, in elevation of aspiration, in bounty of goodness, in intensity of devotion, he may, day after day, year following year, decade succeeding decade, grow into a true adorer of the All-holy God! For, as he grows, we believe he will be a blessing unto all around, with wisdom of mind, with goodness of heart, with strength of conscience, with serenity of temper

* In Pithapuram Palace, after the opening service on the twenty-first birthday of the Yuvarajah (29-10-31).

and with devotion, of soul. Great are the opportunities Thou hast provided for Him out of Thy mercy. Do Thou shape them into benedictions throughout his life. May he be taught not only the responsibility of position—that is all too secular—but the sympathy of heart and the devotion of soul that will make all position a gift of God and a trust for man! And may he exalt the renown of this House through all the days and years of his lengthening life! He is unto us dear with all the intensity of affection, precious with all the expectation of prayer. May he prove a gift of God unto us all; and may this Home and this Domain, this dear plot in the garden of Thy grace, find in him a faithful steward and a devoted servant of Thee; and in that faithfulness and that devotion, may he make his body, mind and soul pure and strong with the purity and the strength of love, and employ them to subserve Thy holy purpose! May he be a benediction unto untold children of Thine! Fostering him, the parents; loving him, the brother and the sisters; devoted to him, the spouse; faithful to him, the dependents; and true to him, the associates—may they all join and be unified in serving to fulfil Thy purpose in him; and may they all perceive

with increasing vividness how Thy benign and bountiful grace is dwelling in and sanctifying this Home! Father, unto Thee, the Eternal Love, all are alike; and yet in Thine all-witnessing eye, each has a distinct individuality. And this dear child is, we believe, designed by Thee to make known the gospel that through every life God is the Purveyor of all the needs for the uplift of man. Make his soul the sanctuary of Thy holiness, his heart the treasury of Thy love, his speech the message of Thy goodness, his deeds the doings of Thy benignity, and his whole life the gift of Thy grace to be rendered back to humanity as Thy benediction. May he be, in impressive ways, Thine own typical child! Bless her whom Thou hast given him as his co-pilgrim to be by him and cheer him as they advance, step by step, deeper and closer into Thy Kingdom of truth, goodness and righteousness. And make his life in every way a message of Thy *santhi* unto all, in the fulness of Thy grace.

Om! Santhih! Santhih! Santhih!

Om! Harih Om!

IX
IN THE HOUSEHOLD OF FAITH.*
(1926)

Mother Divine! How the heart leaps up in the bosom, as the tongue utters this thrice-blessed word! Thou art manifest to us now and here in the endearing, enrapturing relationship of the Mother of us all. To call Thee the Mother, to feel Thee as the Mother, to see Thee as the Mother, to approach Thee as the Mother, to embrace Thee as the Mother, to rejoice in Thee as the Mother—this is the bliss, the beatitude, of every soul born into the childhood of faith and love. We are the children of faith imparted by Thee, the offspring of love infused by thee. We are truly and verily Thine own family. For this we render whole-hearted thanks unto Thee.

We are met here, men and women, young and old, for convenience sake standing under

* At a 'Social' organised by the Brahma fraternity in the Sivanath Memorial Hall, Calcutta, on the occasion of a visit (19-2-26).

various designations, talking in different tongues, and following diverse customs. Yet with faith unifying all variations and love harmonising all distinctions and Thy own benignant spirit overshadowing all, we are gathered together in Thy parental embrace. This is the bliss of this evening. And for it all we bring to Thee the tribute of our grateful thanks.

Not merely are the tongue sweetened, the eye gladdened and the atmosphere around brightened, but every soul is sanctified by the touch of Thy Holy Being. Heart reaching out to heart, soul flowing into soul, even before the word of the tongue is exchanged or the look of the eye reciprocated—this is practicable in spiritual kinship alone, realised only in the family affinities of the spirit. For this we bow down before Thee in reverential gratitude.

Wisdom speaking the language of tender solicitude to the innocent, gentleness transmitting the crude into the fine, sympathy cheering the dejected, and saintliness casting the gleam of love on the reprobate—all these experiences are vouchsafed this evening. For all this we offer Thee the homage of our warmest thankfulness.

Thou art here present in the indubitable reality of Thy spirit. And thus, Thy inspiring presence alone renders it possible for us, within the brief compass of a sweet half-hour, to treasure up such a fund of mutual goodwill and reciprocal regard, replenished affection and reinforced aspiration. For this we own our soul-deep sense of indebtedness unto Thee.

May the refreshing memory of this evening dwell with us in all the rapture of a vision and all the ecstasy of a melody! And may we carry with us, in our grateful hearts, the most benignant reminiscences of this delightful gathering of our household of faith, which Thou hast mercifully brought about, that thus we might behold and rejoice how Thy grace works marvels in the spirit of man—even with unsolicited and unmerited blessings! Blessed, blessed be Thy name, now and for ever!

Om! Brahma Kripahi Kevalam!

Om! Santhih! Santhih! Santhih!

X
NOT LOSS BUT GAIN
(1931)

Thou, the Author of Life; Thou, the Ordainer of Death! Many and vivid are the instances when it is given even to the unreflecting to appreciate Thee and to feel thankful unto Thee as the Author of Life. But few, exceedingly few, regrettably few, are the occasions when it is given unto humble mortals to recognise Thee and to bow before Thee as the Ordainer of Death. For, how exceedingly few are the blessed ones whose passing away is the compelling occasion to ponder over perpetual life and unbounded outlook! And such rare occasions, how regrettable, how deplorable, it would be even for the weal of our souls to miss, to fail to study and store in our memories! This is one of those richly edifying and reassuring occasions when death is proved not loss but gain, not an occasion for grief and lamenta-

* *Adya-sraddha* prayer at Sree R. V. M. G. Ramarao Bahadur Orphanage Mandir, Cocanada, in memory of Nabhi Ramamurthi Pantulu Garu, B.A. (6-12-'31).

tion but an opportunity for, devout and reverential, though heart-heavy, thanksgiving. A life so carefully, so assiduously, so admirably shaped into the full orb of all-sided growth and self-realisation—a life of such uncommon excellence is a witness and testament of Thy holy doings. And for such a worthy life we are here to render our profoundly grateful thanks. With our human affinities fostered even by Thy providence, we may writhe in anguish and heave the distressing sigh of separation. Yet even unto us is brought the assurance that a life so devoted to the noble ends of sanctified humanity can, not only be never lost, but be for ever translated and advanced from grace to grace, and from glory to glory, even to that apex of perfection when the soul create of God becomes a mirror of the uncreate God. Thus, this pilgrim has been set on the path of ever-increasing progress, everlasting advance, towards Thee. For this vision vouchsafed even unto our dim sight, we render our whole-hearted thanks unto Thee. Not his learning, though extensive; not his uprightness, though uncompromising; not his affectionateness, though so benignant; but his glowing consciousness of the Divine Presence—that is the call and challenge

to us to respect, revere, endeavour to emulate and thus render the homage of true esteem unto, the honoured one that has gone before. His is a soul that testifies to the vast possibilities of the growth and the sanctification inherent in every off-spring of Thy Holy Spirit. May his inspiring example dwell vividly in our memories and work out its hallowing influences through successive generations! The petty differences that separate man from man, the passing antagonisms obsessed with which we miss the worth that is hid at the core of one's being—these are the disintegrating or the degenerating forces at work in our God-forgetting, God-neglecting lives. But the elect spirits that out-top these differences and antagonisms, as the one we honour today, elicit even from us, interested and regardful onlookers, the aspiration and the prayer that we, too, be drawn up into the tranquil and sun-lit region of living and loving fraternity with all whom Thou deignest to own as Thy children. May it be granted to us to receive such inspiration from this truth-gifted and grace-led soul! And, as we prize and cherish all that was noble and lovely and gracious in his great career, may we be, by Thy

inspiration, perennially urged to follow in the footsteps he has left behind on the path for the guidance of those that would ardently make for the goal he sought to attain and laboured to commend with intense zeal! Do Thou vouchsafe unto us, not merely the desire, but also the resolve, that what has been proved real and realisable of truth, goodness, hope and serenity in this model life might, by Thy grace, be, at least in some appreciable measure, cultivated and reproduced also in our humble lives. Grieve for him we shall not; esteem him we cannot but. To reverence one of his worth is to refine ourselves. To follow him in his great tasks is to enrich our lives. Grant that in our thoughts and desires may abide the hallowing reminiscences of that radiant career, that thus, not only the dear and near ones whom he intensely cherished, but also that larger circle of souls with which he enjoyed spiritual kinship, might feel decidedly the better, brighter and happier, for his life having been lived amidst them and Thy grace having been revealed through it!

Here, of all spots, can be an apt and happy realisation of the chaste and sweet influences

of so worthy a life. Here is the seed-plot of love-fostered souls. Here are brought into the bosom of a family such numbers of homeless, hapless, friendless ones. Do Thou grant that Thy grace, as it sent serenity and sunshine into that life, be made manifest in the glowing lives of these children, that thus it be proven that not birth, not rank, not wealth, not even culture, but loyalty, love, devotion and self-consecration constitute the soul's fitness to enter the glory of God. May the inspiring example of that godly life, through those that have, with reverence and gratitude, realised its great worth, be reproduced, in a vivid manner and in a striking measure, in the lives fostered and trained in this Home! Thus he, gone before, will, all the same, stay behind; he translated above, will, all the same, continue to be reflected here below. And thus the continuity of spiritual affinities through successive generations will be maintained, strengthened and enlarged under Thy providence. This is the regeneration of the spirit that Thou hast brought unto us through the heaven-bound course and the serene translation of that soul. May we be baptised, then, into new, pure and devout life! Then shall we render unto Thee praise and

thanks for the gift of that uplifting example. Then will it come true, that the grave has no victory and death no sting, but that the grave is the memorial to worth and death the clarion-call of grace. That noble soul—he dwells now in Thee, not to repose but to be revived, not to rest but to grow. Poor should be our faith in Thee, did we not feel assured that he will never forsake and relinquish us and that his sympathies will not, in the least, be diminished. He lives—lives the larger life, the life of holier self-consecration, which is both the reward and the opportunity Thou vouchsafest unto all faithful souls. He lives in Thee: grant that we may vividly realise that he lives in Thee. With that assurance we shall live, the more ardently the life assigned unto us for Thy glory. Vouchsafe unto us the grace to realise, esteem and benefit by, all the spiritual worth and the inspiring example of that God-indwelt life. Blessed, blessed be Thy name, now and for ever!

Om! Santhih! Santhih! Santhih!

Om! Harih Om!

XI

LEAD, KINDLY LIGHT, LEAD

(1930)

Thou the Supreme One, the Sacred One, the Sanctifying One! Thou art the inner meaning of all learning. Thou art the basic truth of all knowledge. Thou art the parent source of all wisdom. Thou art the supreme perfection of love and righteousness. None of these—truth, wisdom, love, righteousness or other noble, holy ideas and ideals—none of these can convey any meaning, carry any significance, except as an expression, a self-revealing manifestation, of Thee, the All-Perfect Being. In Thee, as the Perfect One, all these great conceptions and ideals find themselves realised and exemplified. And it is Thy most merciful promise unto man to disclose to him the reality of Thy supreme self, to bring home to him the inmost meaning, the deepest significance, of truth and wisdom, goodness and righteousness. Thus man is Thy child in that he partakes of Thy

* Opening prayer at a *sangat* in Pithapuram (9-2-'30).

nature. He is made by Thee a bright image, a radiant reflection, of Thy perfect attributes. And thus it comes that a perpetual current of spiritual communion goes forth from Thee to Thy child and back from Thy child to Thee, the Parent. In this way, Thou sustainest the growth of the human soul, through all time, in truth, wisdom, peace, love and righteousness. And in thus ensuring his endless growth, Thou dost provide ever-increasing happiness for man. Hence it is to our benefit and our blessing to keep this current of communion strong and steady by renewed eager quests after Thee and by repeated earnest supplication to Thee. It is even with this appeal of the hunger and thirst of the soul that we approach Thee now and here. We beseech Thee to nourish the mind, feed the heart and replenish the soul. We are humble suppliants before Thee for the blessing of truth, wisdom, peace, love and righteousness, in a fresh and full measure; so that our whole being—mind and heart and soul, might imbibe greater light and fuller faith and stronger hope, and deeper devotion. Bound by our limitations, we cannot but employ the human means of speech, thought and enquiry. But all this, oh dear God, is nothing, is worth

nothing, will avail nothing, unless and until Thou dost graciously direct the speech, the thought and the quest along the right course which leads to divine revelation and heavenly bliss. We whole-heartedly trust in Thee; and we confidently commit ourselves to Thy inspiration. However weak and wanting, frail and failing, we be, yet nothing is too weak, too frail, for Thy Divine dispensation. Do Thou deign to enter our lowly hearts. Do Thou take possession of our humble faculties. Do Thou shape our thoughts. Do Thou fill us with the sense of Thy holy presence. Do Thou grant that our speech be the voice of Thy truth and the oracle of Thy righteousness. We are unworthy, absolutely unworthy, of Thy grace. Yet Thou art the all-forgiving, all-redeeming God. We come to Thee with the simple trust of children. We hold by the hope that in Thy abundant mercy, Thou wilt bless us. May we be enabled to close this meeting with mind, heart and soul—aye, every part of our being, rendered pure and true, good and lovely, gracious and holy, through Thy blessing—the blessing of the Parent, the blessing of the Preceptor, the blessing of the Protector, the blessing of the Saviour! Bless us on this

coveted occasion with the rich blessing of Thy self-revelation to our souls. Lead, kindly Light, lead our spirits into the beatification of God-vision! *Om! Thath Sath!*

XII

MOTHERHOOD AND IMMORTALITY

(1932)

O Thou, the Eternal One, Thou art the God of the living. They, alone are sharers of Thy spirit, inheritors of true life, who live in Thee. Death is Thy challenging question unto the neglectful man—What is it that thou prizest and holdest dear ? Is it the body, of which it may truly be said, ‘Dust thou art, to dust returnest’? Is it the bloom of youth and the winsomeness of look and gait that thou hast so long and so affectionately locked in thy heart ?” Like unto the grass that is green in the morning but is dry rubble at nightfall, this body hath sprung from the earth and falleth into the grave. Thou challengest us with this arresting and mystifying sight of Death: ‘What is it thou prizest and holdest dear?’ Not merely the hope and imagination which would cling to what is slipping out of the grip but the intuition—the divine prompting—in the soul,

* Prayer at the second annual *śraddha* of the mother
Prof. Braja Sundar Roy, M.A., B.L., Pithapuram (4-2-'32).

this it is that answers the question. 'The body, save in moments of self-forgetfulness, I have not prized, I have not held dear, as the supreme possession. But that which has made even this lowly dust lovely, which shines through the eye and speaks through the voice with the light that cheers and the word that quickens—that unquenchable, that indestructible element which partakes of the essence of Divine life has been the object of my love and my attachments.' The sleeping soul is awakened to the reality of its own self; and it realises how in the whole universe teeming with countless creatures of God, out of the untold varieties of animal life, man and man alone is *never weaned from the mother*. Only for a brief period do all other animals cling to each other, with instinct impelling on one side and helplessness prompting on the other. For the day comes when they know not each other: parent and progeny not only part company but even rush at each other in dire conflict. But the human soul always desires and possesses the mother near and dear and joyful. And this is proof of Thine own ordinance that the mother is ever-available, as the soul is everlasting. None, nothing, can deprive the child of the mother, can take away

from the child the mother in whose bosom it rests in peace and joy. Time is absolutely helpless in wearing out this relationship. Neither can space detach the child from the mother or the mother from the child. Thus Thou provest that not only is the mother dear because of Thee, as Thy gifted ones have observed, but Thou art dear because of the mother. For, as the Giver of the mother, Thou art dear; while herself the gift of God, the mother makes Thee dear. Thus, the mother being essentially, spiritually, inseparable, the mother's love is imperishable; nor can the child's affection and reverence be ever extinguished, or their object ever missed. This is the immortality of Love sustained by Thee. Where Thou lovest once, Thou lovest for ever; where Thou inspirest true love once, Thou inspirest that love for ever. Thus, holding each one of us for ever dear unto Thee, Thou, by Thy most inspiring example, teachest us to hold each one once dear for ever dear unto us. Thus it is not, as in the mere animal, the physical attachment and the instinctive adherence; but even as man is the child of God, it is the link indissoluble and the bond adamantine of imperishable love. My mother, made mine by the holy love of Thy in-

spiring, is mine all the time that Thou continuest to inspire that love. Not to the eye, but to the soul, is she ever clear and dear; and she is mine for ever in Thee and with Thee as the Mother in the mother!

On this occasion, we are met here, oh Thou all-embracing, all-unifying, all-sanctifying One, in the single family of a mother seemingly withdrawn two years back but kept alive for ever in the heart. Yes; as winter yields place to spring, so is Death the prelude to revived, rejuvenated Life; and Life shall thus endure for ever in Love. As Life is not only a Calvary for cross-bearing but also a resurrection for exalting the cross into the crown, Thou makest Love sovereign; and Divinely-ordained sovereign rule knows no termination. Where Thou dost inspire love once, Thou dost perennially feed it time without end. This is our guarantee of immortality—the imperishability of every sacred relation of Thy gifting and sustaining. *Suddhamapapaviddham*: that is the destiny of life, that which is holy is indestructible, eternal. It not only survives time but transmutes the products of time into the possessions of eternity. We are the off-spring of

Thee, the Holy One; and in Thee we live for ever. Thou art the God that creates love, that sustains love, that replenishes love, that sanctifies love, that blesses love and that perpetuates love through eternity. In Thee, the God of Love, there is no death, there is no separation, there is no tear of privation, no pang of bereavement. In Thee, the God of Love, there is eternal life, there is eternal joy, there is eternal benediction. Thee as the God of love and immortality—of immortality in love, we bless and praise on this occasion. Wonder of wonders, the suggestive physical presence withdrawn before the eye, from out the grave the dear departed is resurrected in resuscitated memory and in revived attachments! All the occasions, all the tokens, all the expressions of motherly solicitude, of motherly self-denying devotion—all, all spring up from the very grave of the body into the rejuvenated life of cherished memory, of reverent gratitude and of adoring sonship.

Unto Thee we bow in solemn reverence. But while the soul renders thanks and sings praise, does not the heart experience the pang of the mother not adequately revered, the

mother not appropriately honoured, the mother not ardently adored while she lived? The witness—the incriminating witness, the torturing, burning, harrowing witness—of memory tells how the mother had yet to be realised, valued and esteemed. And now the residue of that debt she receives in thankfulness to the Giver of the mother, that God-like one, symbolic even of Thee. We bow and say, ‘Mother, we are on Thy lap and in Thy embrace; Thy smile cheers us; and the throb of Thy heart pulsates new life in us: Thou makest us once again Thy children. Oh, may we become purer as children of the Spirit! Blessed be the name of God the Mother! Blessed be the name of the child-soul nestled and hallowed in the Divine Mother, to live the child-life of Heaven and be the child-minstrel unto the glory of the Deity! Hallowed be Thou and Thy name, oh Thou blessed Mother of Immortality!

Om! Santhih! Santhih! Santhih!

Om! Harih Om!



APPRECIATIONS
AND
REMINISCENCES.

I
RAJAH RAM MOHAN ROY.
(1925)

In his work, a collection of discourses, called 'Creative Unity', our world-renowned poet-seer, Rabindranath Tagore, employs a very suggestive epithet to indicate the true spirit of the Message of Rajah Ram Mohan Roy. He very rightly describes Ram Mohan as one of the 'Immortal Personalities of modern time', as he is beyond question the foremost of the universalists of the nineteenth century. It is the profound significance of this characterisation that is more and more unfolding itself in all the happenings round about us that I would invite attention to on this occasion.

Some decades ago, even like our distinguished and esteemed brother here with us in the chair, a young man from Sweden came over to India and gave to her his time and energy, his attachment and his service. He adopted the

* Speech on the ninety-second Anniversary day at Pithapuram Palace, Rev. C. F. Andrews presiding. (27-9-1925)

Indian mode of life, toiled hard for India amidst the environments of Indian Society; and so endeared himself to India by exemplifying the spirit of humanity that, wherever he passed along, he elicited the mingled sentiments of affection and awe. The reason that impelled Hammargren, that young man from far-off Sweden, to come to India and dedicate himself to the welfare of India, with a zeal all his own, was that he happened to have read one of Ram Mohan's pamphlets, and he felt inspired to undertake a pilgrimage to Ram Mohan's country, there to live and serve and lay down his life. Ours is no mere patriotic pride as we dwell on how there came one from the practical West to the contemplative East, from the sovereign West to the subject East, to pour out his life at the feet of India. Thus to feel this pride about the attractions of our mother-country is doubtless a permissible sentiment. But it will argue a very imperfect grasp of the significance of the incident, if we stop there. Its true meaning, its inner spirit, lies in the vision which Ram Mohan saw and the mission which Ram Mohan undertook. His advent removed the traditional barriers between East and West by rendering obsolete the sentiment then wide-

ly prevailing in Europe that all that lay on this side of the Ural range of hills was unilluminated heathenism, if not uncultured barbarism. He was the prime mover among the potent agencies that wrought a wholesome modification of this view. Unto his lofty, inspired soul there was but one humanity which knew not these soul-cramping distinctions. In Dr. Tagore's judgment, the most momentous fact of modern days is this, that the West has met the East. Ram Mohan Roy inaugurated this 'rapprochement.' In himself, the Rajah vindicated the greatness of the East to the West. But more: even on the principle that you get to understand the inner spirit in so far **only as** you become that spirit, he could enter **into the** spirit of the West and interpret it to the **East**. The truth which the whole world, since Ram Mohan's day and, in particular, during the last few years, has been feeling after and striving to enunciate, is that not through competition but through co-operation, not even through mere social or racial comradeship but through intimate spiritual fellowship, must both East and West find their common salvation. Ram Mohan, therefore, is, in the truest sense, the **Father of the Modern Age**. The outstanding

characteristic of the Age is that its spirit—the modern spirit—rightly conceived and judiciously applied, will admit of no exceptions, no reservations, no exclusions, in the whole compass of life. Human interest, human outlook, this spirit asserts, must be co-extensive with the complete circuit of creation. At the same time, it must be co-penetrative with the profundities of the spirit. Nothing which finds a place in God's creation can be left out of the interest and appreciation of the modern spirit. That was the world-wide horizon of Ram Mohan; and that, therefore, suggests it to me—and I venture to place it before you for consideration—that Ram Mohan might not have been, as the presentation made of him this morning would imply that he was not a 'saint', but, according to the recognised phrase, he was beyond doubt a 'seer' to whom it was given to see visions from the holy heights of God-communion. To see a vision—how rare a privilege this is and, in the eternal values of the spirit, an altogether higher function than to proclaim a message! The prophet is only the foster-child of the seer. The seer inspires the prophet, as the prophet impels the race. The vision comes with impressive vividness and in inspir-

ing glory even from the Supreme Spirit from whom alone all light emanates. And in point of this vividness and glory of vision, I am impelled to ask whether, in the whole hierarchy of seers since Ram Mohan up to the present day, there has been another to take rank by his side alike for clarity of sight and sweep of view. In whichever direction we turn, be it to discover a truth or to design a reform, we at once perceive that he, in his day, was far ahead of us. What he did must necessarily have been limited by his times and circumstances. Nevertheless, he revealed and represented the potentialities of the modern age, while his successors have only followed the pursuits evolved out of those potentialities. A fragment of the literary work of the man to find its way to Sweden and there to elicit soul-deep and life-long devotion to the country of the author—that speaks to the virility and virtue of the spirit which the vision evoked out of Ram Mohan.

Now, the next idea is: it is not every day we get a seer who sees the very glory of God in the celestial light of inspiration. And when a seer does come, then for the whole world a new epoch begins. Ram Mohan was thus the

leader of a pilgrimage; his duty as the head of a great band of pilgrims being to go forth and forward till the destination of the pilgrimage was reached, while his companions were to follow as he led, keeping touch even with the stragglers behind. If Ram Mohan, therefore, was the chosen Apostle of the East unto the West, to prompt the pilgrimage of the West to the East, India could no longer be regarded as the insular creation of God. Far from this, each nation is an indispensable section of the mosaic of the human race; and each does and must contribute its distinct aspect to make complete the beauty of the universal frame. Hence we must guard against the mistake of asserting, 'I shall be the whole of the mosaic' This pretension runs counter to the entire trend of history. Asia's message, in particular, is: from the individual to the family, the village, the tribe, the nation and, finally, the entire race. That is God's eternal purpose which shows no halting and suffers no hindrance. Such was the morning-song heard by Ram Mohan in all the sweetness and symphony of its full chorus. Consequently, his has been the message of a God who is the Creator and Care-taker of the entire universe. No age or

country, no moment or spot, in creation but is indwelt by God. And His purpose through all eternity is one and only one, towards the realisation of which all, all shall combine and co-operate. Thus, finally, all religions become one, unified in God, as Ram Mohan declared not alone in the riper years of profound experiences but even in the earlier days of *Tuhfat-ul-Muwahiddin*. The story goes that, as Wesley was taken to the gate of Heaven, he made the enquiry, 'Any Wesleyans here?' 'None', was the answer. 'Any Protestants?' 'No, none'. 'Then, any Christians at all?' 'None'. 'Then, who dwell here?' 'All Believers only'. Unto Rajah Ram Mohan Roy belongs the glory of the Archetype of modern universalists who hold that the citizenship of Heaven is chartered to no sectaries but only to 'believers', and that this Religion is 'lofty as is the love of God and ample as the wants of man.'

II

RAJAH RAM MOHAN ROY.

(1908)

Every country has received the gift of Heaven in the shape of high attainment in a distinguishing aspect of the Truth. All the same and in a special sense, India is the chosen land of Him who shapes the destinies of nations. Apart from the patriotic pride too prone, no doubt, to gild the picture to itself, it is hardly to be doubted that in India there has appeared an unbroken succession of sages and saints to a degree rarely paralleled elsewhere. The view may be held as quite reasonable and justifiable that, in this country, there has been no period when God has not manifested Himself through an inspiring soul. The quantity of our religious literature, taken by itself, is unsurpassed. What means this circumstance but the evidence of a sustained effort to trace out the progress of the spirit along the path of

* Concluding presidential remarks at a public meeting in the College Hall, Cocanada. (27-9-'08).

Truth, though it be in different forms and ways? There may have been even imperfections, as there are in all human experiences and utterances. But from the earliest dawn of the life of our race even unto this day, there has been a steady flow, a ceaseless current, of the word of God speaking to and through the hearts of men. If the clearest traces of human progress are to be found in the development of language, in the advance of thought, in the sensing of the Divine in the incidents of daily life and in the devout endeavour to realise the God so manifested, the noteworthy characteristic of our country is that, though there appear periodically an obstacle, a hampering set-back, yet again and again there springs up a fresh movement to reinvigorate the inner spirit of the race.

As that deep-sighted thinker of our times, Mahadev Govinda Ranade, has observed, Ram Mohan Roy was but one of the founders of the Theistic Church in India. If Ram Mohan can claim his descent from the ancient *rishis*, the Theistic Dispensation can claim for itself a source as far-reaching as the Rig-veda. Therein you find the beginnings of dissatisfaction

with the existing circumscribed conception of God, a yearning to realise Him in an ampler spirit. And the answer comes: Him who is all-pervading, Him who is omnipotent, Him who is omniscient, Him who is the Creator and Preserver of all, realise Him as Brahman. That oracle never has been silent. Only we hear voices, as we see objects, according to our capacity. So everywhere there is a personal element; but it will diminish and disappear as we progress. Underlying all surface phases, in the soul there is a sense of the reality and a perception of the sanctity of Truth. Judge of the Theistic Dispensation as revealed through the Vedas and the Upanishads. You therein hear, in spite of all limitations subsequently designated as superstitions, the inner voice of man still declaring, 'Not this, not this; but a Higher One'. However surprising it be that there are found in these confessions of faith certain elements not compatible with the illimitable nature of God, they do, nevertheless, give expression to a remarkably lofty conception of the Deity. Why, go even to any ordinary *bhajana* place, and you will find that, beneath all encrusting, hampering accretions, there is a noble conception of God as the One who

has no limit, no condition, but is absolute. Rajah Ram Mohan Roy laid hold of this ultimate, basic principle in the Indian mind, and brought it into predominance. As Ranade, again, has observed, the Rajah was surprised to find about him a conception of God spiritually so grand, so sublime, so exalting, and yet, side by side with it, also, a ceremonialism deplorably gross and degrading. There was a glaring contrast between the heights to which the soul could rise in the contemplation and the depths to which it could fall in the practice of Truth. Ram Mohan Roy emphatically averred that for India's salvation the lower phase must be forsaken and the higher conserved and popularised. He reaffirmed the age-long, the world-old certitude that for every soul it is possible, natural and hence imperative to worship the Spirit-God in spirit—in truth, love and righteousness. Do not, then, so depreciate and degrade the divine element in human nature as to dogmatise that such spiritual worship is too far beyond the average man's reach. To hedge oneself with and amidst ceremonious surroundings and symbols and then endeavour to practise true worship is much more difficult, indeed, than to

apprehend and approach the Spirit of God through devout contemplation in the spirit. Spiritual things are only spiritually discerned. Many hold the view that Ram Mohan Roy came merely to condemn idolatry. But that is only the secondary, negative side of his life-work. He came really to proclaim that spiritual worship was the birthright of every soul that is really an offspring of God. He introduced congregational worship to show that unto every man the door is open, the lamp burning and the conch sounding, as they invite and greet one and all. Hence he could say to Devendranath Tagore, yet a little boy, when he came to invite the Rajah to the Durga-puja at the bidding of his father, 'Am I, too, required there?' That word dwelt with young Devendranath and proved of immense good to him in after-life. Similarly with Swami Dayananda Saraswati. At a very tender age, he was once taken to the worship in the temple of Pardhiva Linga. At dead of night, when all were gone or had fallen fast asleep and only he was left to keep the vigil before the idol in the midst of quiet and solitude, the rats were seen freely running about over the image and appropriating the *prasadam*. The thoughtful

little boy asked himself, 'Can this be Mahadev?' We have illusioned ourselves and called it light; we have chloroformed ourselves and called it *yoga*. But keep the soul awake and it will be seen that, even a little child, wisely led, can realise that God is a Spirit. When twelve years old, I was put to read Hindustani. Every lesson there opened with 'In the name of the Lord, the Compassionate and the Merciful!' And every time the doubt would arise in the mind, 'Can the idols in the temples and in the home be the object of this invocation?' In the class-lessons I used to ponder longer and deeper upon portions that dealt with God and Religion. Again, on my way to and from school, I would rejoice in reciting some Persian verses in praise of the One God which I had culled out. All this I state, not for the sake of self-praise, but to show that it is possible, even in early life, to rise to the conception of a Spirit-God. This worship is never too early any more than it is too early for the child to draft the milk from the mother's bosom. No, it is never too early to think of and talk to our Heavenly Father. That relationship, while it is, no doubt, so subtle and so profound, is yet so intimate, so personal and so interwoven with

the texture of our very existence; thus it is altogether natural.

Ram Mohan Roy realised all too vividly that idolatry is prejudicial to spirituality as being the seed-plot of ceremonialism and superstition. The whole Theistic conception from that stand-point the Rajah distilled into such pamphlets as these which are often neglected by the readers of the Rajah's works: "Universal Religion"; "Answer of a Hindu to the question, 'Why do you frequent a Unitarian place of worship?'; "Humble Suggestions to my Countrymen" *et cetera*. To Ram Mohan, who, as Sir Monier Williams has observed, was the first to make a serious study of Comparative Religion, not only was God supreme and immanent but also His revelation was universal. Thus it is that Ram Mohan taught that God was available and accessible, not for a particular age, individual or community alone, but always and for all. And thus it is that all religions can claim Ram Mohan as their advocate; and yet to pin him down to any one creed alone is possible to none. He asks us to know that God is equally solicitous about the welfare of all His children; he urges us to survey human

history and realise not only that the present is the natural sequel to the past but also that every other country is in happy harmony with our country.

The work of every prophet is threefold: interpreting the past, invigorating the present and forecasting the future, so that the past may inspire the present and the present may inform the future. Accordingly, the problem before Ram Mohan was how to appraise the correspondences between the Upanishads and other national scriptures and to harmonise all ideals and aspirations proper to India. He was a man that lived ever in communion with the past, in dedication to the present and in outlook on the future. He strove to revivify the past for the strength of the present and mould the present for the use of the future. Rajah Ram Mohan Roy, the spokesman of his own age, was the interpreter of the past and the prophet of a future age, exhorting us to keep our souls open to the ever-quickenings impulses of the Inner Spirit of all ages. As Ranade said in the closing part of his address on the Rajah, he started that universal current of intercommunion now spreading all over the world, gaining strength from various quarters.

There are three ways of testing a great man. One is by studying the condition of society during his time and measuring the difference in mental and moral elevation between the normal level of the times and the altitude he himself has reached. This is the personal, individual, glory of the man. This is, as it were, the height of his soul. A second test is by taking into account the extent of the field over which his influence has spread and the lively sympathy he has evinced towards the numerous public activities of his times. This is, as it were, the breadth of his soul. The third test is by gauging the insight he has shown into the reality of things. This is, as it were, the depth of his soul. And herein, indeed, is the soundest of the tests. Such a person was Jesus, a humble carpenter yet rich with that inspiration which could discern that Solomon in all his splendour was not arrayed with the glory of the lilies of the field. Such a person was Sree Krishna. He had the penetrating insight to probe to the core of the universe. Such a person was Dayananda Saraswati. Such a person was Ramakrishna Paramahansa. And such a person was Ram Mohan, too, to a striking degree. Such men are, in fact, an inte-

grant part of the life-economy of the world. They say and do things that appear to be commonplace but really possess within them an inexhaustible vitality which unfolds itself age after age. During his life-time, Ram Mohan Roy drew only a small band of followers around him. But year after year we see the spirit of his teaching, if not the number of his explicit followers, is steadily gaining strength. His is a life, not to be glanced at as a curiosity, not to be admired from a distance, but to be studied closely and contemplated reverently as an exponent of living truth and inspirer of vitalising strength. Different people can study different aspects of it. A man like Mr. N. N. Ghosh studies him as a Humanist. One like Sir Gurudas Banerjea studies him as a Jurist. Another like Keshub Chander Sen studies him as a versatile genius in Religion alike in abstract theory and concrete life. Indeed, he was the forerunner, the fore-staller, the inaugurator, the progenitor of all our national activities in this age. As Surendranath Banerjea has observed, the convincing proof of his greatness and many-sidedness is that after his death his work had to be divided amongst half a dozen successors. Dēvendra-

nath Tagore had to take up the religious, Vidyasagar the social, and Kristodas Pal the journalistic aspect of it. Such a remarkably great man Ram Mohan could be, because he went to the heart of things. He has thus become a perennial spring of inspiration; for, the nation and the race, and this is because the fountain-head of life and light for him was God Himself. He avowed to himself, 'I shall not grudge, I shall not shrink, I shall not flinch; I have trust in God, who judgeth in secret and rewardeth openly.' He had that unswerving, unshakable confidence in the Deity which begat confidence in himself as well. What makes the difference, at bottom, between us and one like Ram Mohan? Our current religion is, as Emerson has said, but a ceremonialism that migrates through the zodiac of fasts and feasts. We lack, we are utterly wanting in, true, spiritual vitality. But in him the several faculties were so healthily and harmoniously developed that all good causes appealed to him. The widow's wail, the poor man's suffering, the ignorant man's groping, and, more than all, India's craze of ceremonialism revelling in a multiplicity of gods—all pressed heavy upon his soul. And he said, 'Shall India wail for ever?'; and he set himself

to establish the spiritual worship of the One All-comprehending, All-inspiring God as the panacea for India's untold ills. Hence, this comes to be the distinguishing characteristic of the Brahma Samaj, that while the ancient Aryans kindled the fire in the hearth, the Samaj seeks to kindle the fire in the heart—the fire of divine faith, the fire of divine hope, the fire of divine charity—and thus to shed the spiritual radiance of our national renaissance all over the world.

O Thou, all-enduring, all-embracing God, may our hearts be attuned to the spirit of the Rajah! May our lives be lived in the light of his life! May his spirit spread from age to age! May his noble vision of a full-formed, all-sided nation be realised! May we so appreciate the kinship of humanity that, loving our country, we may never fail to love likewise all other lands! As we receive more and more of Thy grace, may we draw closer and closer one to another in fraternal relationship! Help us so to realise Thy Fatherhood that there may grow in and around us a fraternity with the song of Thy praise and the hymn of Thy glorification! Blessed, blessed be Thou and Thy name now and for ever!

Forme 18—23 printed at The Huxley Press, Madras

